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AIDS  
TO THE  
DIVINE  
LIFE.









AIDS  
TO  
**The Divine Life**  
IN

A SERIES OF PRACTICAL  
CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIONS.

(Originally Published by "T. S." 1880.)

NEW EDITION.

EDITED, WITH A PREFACE,  
BY WILLIAM MAUDE.

"Grateful—  
To palates that can taste immortal truth;  
Insidious else, and sure to be despised."  
COWPER.

Liverpool  
EDWARD HOWELL  
1865.

141. k. 60.

**R. HOWELL, PRINTER, LIVERPOOL.**



## PREFACE.

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THE little work which is here presented to the reader *in a new dress*, was originally published in the year 1680, under the following title:—“*Divine Breathings: or, a Manual of Practical Contemplations, in One Century; tending to promote Gospel Principles, and a Good Conversation in Christ.*” T. S. London: published for Nathaniel Ponder.” By the middle of the last century, though its well-deserved reputation survived, the work itself had become exceedingly scarce, as appears from the following advertisement prefixed to an edition of Sibbe’s *Meditations*, published in 1775:



“There is another little piece, in duodecimo, of an unknown though not an ancient author, (the running title ‘Practical Contemplations,’) consisting of one hundred meditations on very interesting subjects, the title-page lost, . . . . which has been very frequently inquired for, and particularly both in the *Gentleman’s* and the *Gospel Magazine*, and many judicious persons wish it could be found and likewise republished.”

These wishes, I rejoice to say, were gratified by its recovery and republication, in 1815, by G. Lambert of Hull, who commences his address to the reader in these words: “Christian Reader! Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which was lost; nor could I sufficiently enjoy the pleasure unless you became a participant with me . . . . The

edition from which this is published was printed for Nathaniel Ponder, Poultry, London, 1680. The author's signature is 'T. S. : ' who he was I have not been able to learn ; but from his work I venture to pronounce him a wise scribe, well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." \*

As regards the book itself, if, as a clever writer has somewhere said, " great books, like large skulls, have often the least brains," it possesses the double recommendation of being small, and having brains beyond its size. Certainly the old proverb, which declares " a great book to be a great evil," true at all times, is especially true at the present time.

\* Who " T. S. " was is still a mystery ; recent inquiries made by the writer, through the medium of " Notes and Queries," and other channels, having failed completely in identifying the author.

Our age is too busy for the folios of our fathers. Like the railway train, rushing on with accelerated speed as it approaches the terminus, the world seems hurrying on as if it felt that it had but a short time in which to despatch its remaining business. The ceaseless whirl of events, the bewildering phantasmagoria which each succeeding day presents to our notice, and the anxious necessities of business, sacred and secular, leave most of us scant time for reading or study. Here then is a book, in size *small* enough for the pocket ; in arrangement divided into portions, *short* enough to be read at any leisure moment ; and yet in matter *weighty* enough to supply much food for profitable meditation. Good old THOMAS FULLER wrote *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*; the

reader may find in the following pages *brief thoughts for busy times.*

The lines of the sweet Christian poet Cowper, which appear as the motto on the title-page, indicate very accurately the character of the work. To those who lack a spiritual palate it will doubtless prove altogether uninteresting; but to such as, "by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," it will, I think, be rejoiced over as the finding of great spoil.

I have only to add that in the present edition the spelling has been modernized, obsolete words and forms of expression changed, and the one hundred contemplations, of which the work originally consisted, digested under twenty-one general heads. It is hoped that, at all events, these alterations will not

*detract* from the value of the work, no liberties having been taken with the sentiments of the author. And on the sure ground of the excellence of those sentiments, praying that the Divine blessing may once again accompany its publication, I commend this volume, small in size but not in value, to the prayerful perusal of the Christian reader.

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## THE AUTHOR'S ADDRESS TO THE READER.

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TO THE READER,

As it should be our concern to get our judgments informed, so also our conversation reformed : our heads filled with Gospel light, and our lives with Gospel holiness : we should hold fast and hold forth that which is good. Paul saith of the Corinthians : " Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart," (2 Cor. iii. 3.) And of the Thessalonians : " From you sounded out the word of the

Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad," (1 Thess. i. 8.) The commendation of a Christian is to have truth written in his heart, and read in his life. Of the Romans saith the same Apostle : " Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which ye were delivered," (Rom. vi. 17.) To have doctrine not only delivered to us, but to be delivered into that doctrine, so as to be framed and moulded into the fashion of it, is what we should labour after. How far the following sheets tend to promote this work, I leave to be considered. But that our hearts may be so sanctified by truth, as that we may obey truth from the heart, is the prayer of thy well-wisher,

T. S.

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# AIDS TO THE DIVINE LIFE.

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## THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

**"As the serpent raised by Moses  
Heal'd the burning serpent's bite,  
Jesus thus Himself discloses  
To the wounded sinner's sight:  
Hear His gracious invitation—  
'I have life and peace to give,  
I have wrought out full salvation,  
Sinner, look to me and live.'"**

**JOHN NEWTON.**

IN the 21st chapter of the book of Numbers we read, that when the children of Israel murmured against God and Moses, the Lord sent fiery serpents amongst them, by the bite of which many died. But upon the acknowledgment of their sin, and the prayer of Moses for them, God commanded a serpent of brass to be made and set upon a pole, with a promise that every

**B**

one who was bitten, by looking upon it should be healed and live.

This serpent was a type of Christ, as He himself has taught us, saying : " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life, (John iii. 14, 15.) By looking to Him we shall be saved. Between the legal type and the gospel antitype, there is a parallel in divers respects.

1. Every one who was stung, the poor as well as the rich, the mean as well as the great, might look to the brazen serpent and be healed : so " whosoever," without exception, believeth in the name of the Lord Jesus, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

2. Those who were most severely bitten, were as easily and as completely cured by looking at the brazen serpent, as those who were but slightly bitten : so the greatest sinners, by looking to Jesus Christ, are as readily and as

completely saved as less notorious sinners.

3. As Christ was lifted up in the type for those who murmured against Him, (for they are said to have tempted Christ, 1 Cor. x. 9 :) so He was lifted up upon the cross for those who were His enemies ; yea, those who were His betrayers and murderers ; that, by looking unto Him, even such might be saved.

4. As those justly perished who would not look to the serpent ; but either looked upon their sores as too great to be healed ; or looked upon themselves as not bitten severely enough to need healing ; or else turned aside to other fancied means of cure : so those sinners justly perish who will not come to Christ, either because they think their sins too great to be pardoned, or see not their need of pardon ; or suppose that other means will do without Christ.

5. As those who looked upon the serpent with a dim eye were as perfectly healed as those who looked upon it with

a strong and clear sight : so those who look upon Christ, though it be but with a weak faith, are as completely justified as those who look to Him with a strong faith.

6. As the eye which beheld the brazen serpent beheld other things, but was only cured by beholding that : so the same justifying faith believes all the truths that God has revealed, but for justification looketh only to Christ.

7. Though the promise of healing was the warrant for those who were stung to do what they did ; yet it was not the bare word of promise, but their looking upon the brazen serpent, that healed them : so the promises of salvation by Christ are our warrant to go to Him ; but it is our resting upon Christ in the promises by which we must be saved. "The object of faith," as one observes, "is not an evangelical maxim, or proposition, but the person of Christ."

8. It was the brazen serpent, *lifted up upon the pole*, to which those who were stung by the fiery serpents were

to look : so it is Christ, *as lifted up upon the cross*, and dying for sinners, to which justifying faith looks. Though a whole Christ be the object of justifying faith, yet it hath a peculiar respect to a crucified Christ, as that which is peculiarly suitable to the condition of a distressed sinner. Are you, therefore, under this call of grace, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?" (Isa. xiv. 22.) Beg to be under the efficacy of this call, that He who hath been lifted up would draw you to himself, (John xii. 32.) Thus seeing the Son, may you believe on Him, and have everlasting life by Him, (John vi. 40.)

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## PARDON.

"The holy Theresa finely said, (as Gossner quotes :) 'Lord, I sooner become weary of injuring Thee, than Thou of forgiving my injury.'"

STIER.

"The most guilty man upon the whole earth has it yet in his own power to commit one sin more flagrant than any that he has yet committed, *and that is—to despair of pardon.*"

M. AUGUSTE NICOLAS.

## I.—GOD PARDONING SIN.

As it is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression, (Prov. xix. 2,) so God accounts it His glory to pardon sin. Moses besought the Lord to show him His glory, and accordingly God descended in a cloud, and passed before him, "and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," (Exod. xxxiii. 18; xxxiv. 5—7.) The goodness, grace, and pardoning mercy of God, is His glory, and is called by St. Paul "the riches of His

glory," (Rom. ix. 23 ; Eph. iii. 16.) It is therefore both a sin and a shame for any man to say, his iniquity is greater than can be forgiven ; for what are *finite* sins to *infinite* mercy ? We read of " sin reigning unto death ; " but we also read of " grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," (Rom. v. 21.) We read of the " abounding " of sin, but also of the "*superabounding*" of grace, (verse 20.) The simple verb, says Zanchius, signifies, to *overflow* like a spring that runs forth plentifully, that all may partake of it ; but a preposition is added which augments the force : it is, to " abound above measure," or " exceedingly to overflow." So it is said, " the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant," (1 Tim. i. 14.) It *abounded*, yea, it *exceedingly* abounded ; and it must needs do so, being infinite. Wouldest thou therefore exalt the infinity of God's grace, and the virtue of Christ's blood, say not with Cain, " my iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven," (Gen. iv. 13, *mar-*



*gin*;) but plead with David, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great," (Ps. xxv. 2.)

## II.—GOD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY DISPLAYED IN THE PARDON OF SIN.

There are some who separate between the mercy of God and the mediation of Christ. Because God is gracious and merciful, they hope he will be so to them; whereas God is just as well as merciful, and Justice must be satisfied if ever Mercy is to be exercised. Justice must be our friend, as well as Mercy. If ever we are to be saved, we must have salvation from the throne of Justice, as well as from the seat of Mercy. "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, (Rom. iii. 26.) God is not only gracious, but righteous in the pardon of sin; for Christ, having satisfied justice, obtained mercy, and opened a way for the dispensing of it; and God now appears righteous in justifying the be-

liever. Deceive not thyself, therefore, by hoping for mercy without Christ, or for Christ without faith. Others there are who separate between the death of Christ and his resurrection; between the benefit of the one and the power of the other; between what Christ has wrought *for* sinners and what he works *in* sinners. But take heed; for if Christ hath wrought out salvation for thee, he will work out salvation in thee. He who "died unto sin but liveth unto God," will also make thee "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," (Rom. vi. 10, 11.)

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## COMING TO CHRIST.

"When thou believest, and comest to Christ, thou must leave behind thee thine own righteousness, [Oh, that is hard!] all thy holiness, sanctification, duties, tears, humblings, &c., and bring nothing but thy wants and miseries, else Christ is not fit for thee, nor thou for Christ."

THOMAS WILCOCKS.

1.—MAN WANTS THE WILL RATHER THAN  
THE POWER TO COME TO CHRIST.

Some there are who, when invited to come to Christ, tell you they have no power; whereas, in fact, they have no will. He that was invited to the marriage feast, gave this as his answer, "*I cannot come*," (Luke xiv. 20.) But, if you attend to his reason, it will appear it was because he *would not*. Being invited, you say, What would you have me do, I have no power? Why, only do what *is* in your power. It is in your power to wait at wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, as much as to attend at any other place for your temporal advantage. If you enjoy the means, it

is in your power to hear the word carefully and diligently, as much as to be industrious in your worldly business. It is as much in your power to meditate on what you hear, and frequently to retire within yourself and consider your state, as it is to withdraw and cast up your accounts. It is as much in your power to petition God to give you a penitent heart, as it is to solicit men for what you may want. Therefore use the means—lie at the pool; thou knowest not how soon Christ may come and heal thee. Meditate much upon a crucified and exalted Saviour; thou knowest not how soon an attractive power may proceed from Him and draw thee. With Zacchæus, be in the way; who knows but, whilst thou art looking for Him, Jesus may say to thee, as He said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house," (Luke xix. 9.) Till this be done, say not thou *canst* not come to Christ, but that thou *wilt* not. And, though thou shouldest find thyself to have no heart to come, yet

come, that thou mayest have the heart ; come upon the encouragement of that blessed word : " Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,*" (Phil. ii. 12, 13.)

## II.—OUR SINFULNESS NO EXCUSE FOR NOT COMING TO CHRIST.

How many urge that as a reason for their not going to Christ, which should be the great motive to hasten them to Him. They say they are sinners—great sinners—and therefore they dare not go ! But this is as if a patient should say, I am sick, yea, very sick, and therefore I dare not apply to the physician ; whereas " the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," (Matt. ix. 12.) Consider : " Christ died for the ungodly," (Rom. v. 6.) He hath " received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," (Ps. lxxviii. 18.)

Art thou a notorious and infamous

sinner? Such were the "publicans and harlots," who found mercy;—such was Manasseh, who, by idolatry, enchantment, and shedding innocent blood, wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord; yet, when he humbled himself and prayed, the Lord "was intreated of him, and heard his supplication," (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.) Such also, before conversion, were some of the Corinthians. "Be not deceived," says Paul; "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you*; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," (1 Cor. vi. 9, 11.) Or, hast thou not only neglected, but rejected—not only despised and turned thy back upon, but even opened thy mouth against, God? Yet, see how Wisdom invites even *scorners* to accept of grace, saying, "How long, ye simple

ones, will ye love simplicity? and *the scornors delight in scorning*, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you," (Prov. i. 22, 23.) Or, hast thou nothing but sin and unrighteousness, and yet hast gone on stubbornly, and been stout against God, neither fearing His threatenings, nor regarding His judgments? Yet, hear what he saith: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry," (Isa. xlv. 12, 13.) Great sinners, yea, "the chief of sinners," (1 Tim. i. 15,) have obtained mercy: and to such, Christ upon His resurrection sends His gospel, declaring, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*," (Luke xxiv. 47.) Mark, they were to begin to preach peace, where the Prince of Peace had lately been crucified—

even *at Jerusalem*: and “at Jerusalem” he sends it to his betrayers and murderers—and, among his murderers, to those who had been the chief—to *Annas and Caiaphas*, with their kindred, (Acts iv. 5—12.) Yea, to the high priest, the chief priests, and the whole council, (Acts v. 29, 32.) Say not, then, thy sins are great, and therefore thou dost not dare to go to Christ: this is but to add to them the greatest of all sins—*unbelief*. But say, rather, because my sins are so great, therefore I have the more need to go to this great Saviour.

### III.—ELECTION NO HINDRANCE TO OUR COMING TO CHRIST.

Some, again, make that a hindrance to their going to Christ which should be a mean to further their application. “If,” say they, “we are elected, we shall go; but, if not elected, it is in vain for us to try to go.” But why should we deal worse with our souls than we do with our bodies? If the body is sick we do not say, “I will take no medicine;



for if it be decreed I shall live, I do not need it, and if it be decreed I shall die, it cannot help me." No; we use the means in order to the end. And thus should we do in reference to our souls. Those whom God hath elected unto life, he hath also appointed to go to Christ, that they may have life. It is not thy business first to examine whether God hath chosen thee, but to choose Him. "Make your calling and election sure," (2 Pet. i. 10;) and the way to make our calling and election sure, is to make our calling so. Say not, therefore, "If I am not elected it is in vain to go: but, through grace, I will go, that so I may know that I am elected."

#### IV.—IT IS PRIDE, NOT HUMILITY, THAT KEEPS MEN FROM CHRIST.

Many mistake that for humility which is in fact pride. Such are they who, though they see their need of Christ, and would fain have Christ; yet, because they cannot bring to Him a heart as humble and broken as they

desire, dare not come at all. To be sensible of our unworthiness is good; but to look within ourselves for any thing to render us worthy, is evil. This is *pride*—when men would bring something to Christ, instead of being willing to receive all from Him: and this is true *humility*—for a soul to be nothing in itself, and to come to Christ, according to that gracious invitation: “Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price,” (Isa. lv. 1.) Come, then, empty of self, to a full Christ.

#### V.—THE PROMISES TO BE USED IN COMING TO CHRIST.

In going to Christ we should plead the promises. But some assert that there is no right to a promise before union with Christ; as the man hath no right to the estate of an heiress till he be married to her. And hence it may be inquired, what use can those make of the promises who have not as yet an interest in Christ? In answering this, we must distinguish between the *in-*

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*invitation* of the promise and the *benefit* of the promise. Take, for instance, John iii. 16 ; " Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "*Whosoever believeth*"—there is the *invitation* of the promise, and it is to *all*. But then there is the *benefit* of the promise "*everlasting life*," and that is only for them that believe. All have a right to the promise as a mean to lead them to Christ ; though no right to the benefits promised till they do believe. Let, therefore, the invitation of the promise, which is to all, draw thee : let the warrant of the promise, which is, that those who believe shall not perish, but have everlasting life, encourage thee to lay hold of Christ, who is Himself the thing promised ; for that " eternal life " which God doth promise is " in his Son," (1 John v. 11.)

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## CHRIST RECEIVED.

"Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest;  
Far did I rove, and found no certain home;  
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,  
Who opes His arms and bids the weary come;  
In Christ I found a home, a rest divine,  
And since then I am His, and He is mine."

LYTTE.

## I.—WHAT IT IS TO RECEIVE CHRIST.

True faith is called a receiving of Christ; "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name," (John i. 12.) A true receiving of Christ implies:—

1. That we see ourselves to be naturally destitute of Him. We receive Him, because we are without Him.

2. That we have an exhibition of Him. We could not receive Him were He not presented to us. God holds out Christ in such a word of grace as this: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that who-

soever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," (John iii. 16.)

3. Receiving Christ implies a sense of our need of Him. If any thing be presented to us, and we have no need of it, we are no way concerned about receiving it. But Christ is so tendered to us, that there is something usually added in the tender to convince us of our need of Him: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) How can this latter clause be termed the Gospel, but as it shows us the need a poor soul hath of Christ, that so we may hasten to Him?

4. Receiving Christ is a laying aside all for Christ. We cannot receive with a full hand. We lay aside what we have in hand, to receive that which is presented to us. So the soul that receiveth Christ, layeth aside all for Christ. He empties his hand of sin, and the

world, and self-righteousness, in order to receive Christ.

5. Receiving Christ is the receiving of Him upon His own terms. The donor hath his terms, which the receiver must observe : so the soul must receive Christ as tendered by God—Christ, and Christ alone. A whole Christ, and the whole that comes with Christ. Christ with poverty, as well as Christ with riches. Christ with reproach, as well as Christ with good report. Christ with the cross, as well as Christ with the crown.

6. Receiving implies an actual laying hold of what is presented : so the soul actually closeth with Christ in receiving Him. Wouldest thou then judge rightly concerning thy faith? Thou mayest know how it is with thee in point of believing, from what has been done by thee in point of receiving.

Some sincere souls doubt whether they have rightly closed with Christ, because they cannot say whether it was the person of Christ, or the portion; the good *in* Him, or the good *by* Him,

which they have principally regarded. To raise our esteem of Him, our affection to Him, and our faith in Him, the Scripture holds forth both our necessity and Christ's excellency: the good we shall get by Him, and the worth we shall find in Him. On this account reject not thy faith. The prodigal was received though he sought himself in coming to his father; and if thou findest that, in the first act of faith, Christ hath not had from thee that preference which He ought, labour to mend it by after acts.

## II.—THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST A CONTINUOUS ACT.

The soul that truly receives Christ is continually receiving Him. Reception is not a transient but a continuous act. The soul that has received Christ, and rests upon Him as the foundation, is continually coming to Him as to a living stone, (1 Pet. ii. 4.) As Christ is ever receiving the soul nearer and nearer to Himself, so the soul is receiv-

ing Christ. Our receiving Christ is but an impression made upon our hearts, because of Christ's receiving us. Besides His first reception of believers, we read of a further receiving of them, (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) *He* receiveth them to fuller manifestation and participation of His love; and *they* receive Him in fuller communications and emanations of His grace. Therefore, as Christ apprehends the soul, so the soul should apprehend Christ, that so it "may apprehend that for which also it is apprehended of Christ," (Phil. iii. 12.)

### III.—A WHOLE CHRIST TO BE RECEIVED; AND THAT WITH THE WHOLE HEART.

Some in their understanding assent to the way of salvation, yet do not with their will consent to it. In judgment they are for Christ, but in affection for other things. There is only a part of their soul that is for Christ. Others would have the benefits that are by Christ, but are not for the person of Christ. Or if for His person, it is as a



Saviour, but not as a Lord ; as a Priest to offer a sacrifice for them, but not as a Prophet to instruct them, or as a King to rule over them. So that it is but part of Christ that they would receive. But both these courses are equally dangerous ; for, if we would be saved, we must cleave to Christ with all the faculties of the soul—with will, judgment, affection, &c. And so, again, we must cleave to the whole of Christ—Christ in his natures, person, offices, &c. If, therefore, you would rightly close with Christ, see that your whole soul close with a whole Christ.

#### IV.—THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF A TRUE RECEPTION OF CHRIST.

As the soul hath received Christ, so it should walk in Him. For this we have an express command : “ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk·ye in Him,” (Col. ii. 6.) We read also of “ first love ” and “ first works,” (Rev. ii. 4, 5.) And we should be continually anxious that our love to

Christ be as fervent, our desires after Christ as strong, our esteem of Him as high, our delight in Him as great, and our obedience to Him as full, as in the day of our espousals. We should have as deep a sense of sin, as true a value for Christ, as free a choice of Him, as firm a cleaving to Him, and as lively actings of the soul towards Him, as when we first embraced Him. This is to walk in Christ as we received Him. It was the failing of the Church of Ephesus, that they had fallen from their "first love" and their "first works." It was the commendation of Jehoshaphat, that he "walked in the first ways of his father, David," (2 Chron. xvii. 3.) And it was the glory of the Church of Thyatira, as it will be of all those who follow its example, that "their last works were more than their first," (Rev. ii. 19.)

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## CONVERSION.

"Some are brought to Christ by fire, storms, and tempests; others by more easy and gentle gales of the Spirit. The Spirit is free in the work of conversion, and, as the wind, it blows when, where, and how it pleases. Thrice happy are those souls that are brought to Christ, whether it be in the winter's night or the summer's day."

THOMAS BROOKS.

## I.—REFLECTION LEADS TO CONVERSION.

Reflection is the first step towards reformation. When persons run from God, they run likewise from themselves; they consider neither what they are doing, nor whither they are going. In order to return to God, we must return to ourselves. The prodigal comes to himself before he goes to his father. "How many hired servants," saith he, "of my father's, have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger," (Luke xv. 17.) He considers there *may* be relief in going; nothing but ruin in staying. Thus reflection begets resolution, resolution returning, and returning

meets with a gracious reception. Who would undo himself for want of considering what he is doing ; or shut his eyes that he may not see the destruction coming upon him ? It is said : " What king, going to war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand ? or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace," (Luke xiv. 31, 32.) Man is naturally an enemy of God, and in actual war against Him. But what saith God ? " Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee ?" (Ezekiel xxii. 14.) If not, why wilt thou oppose him when thou canst not withstand ? " Fury," saith he, " is not in me ; who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle ? I would go through them,—or, march against them,—I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may

make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me," (Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.) The King of kings and Lord of lords, sends to invite poor withered thorns and briers to peace, and holds out to them Almighty strength to take hold of. Sit down then, O sinner! and consider what thou doest; or rather, rise up and lay hold of this strength to make peace with God, and thou shalt have peace. Lest that strength which is, if accepted, mighty to save, be, if opposed, as mighty to destroy.

## II.—TRUE CONVERSION.

In turning from sin, it is natural for poor sinners to turn to their own works. To that which was man's first righteousness, they are prone first to betake themselves. They would fain do something for life, rather than believe that they may have life. Whereas, true repentance is a turning from sin to God in Christ, and not a turning from sin to self and our own doings. This can neither make amends for sins past, as

all we can do is but present duty ; nor can it find acceptance for time to come, as it is only in the Beloved that our persons and services can be accepted. Take heed, therefore, either of staying in sinful self, or of turning to righteous self ; but let it be thy desire with the apostle Paul, "to be found in Christ, not having thine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," (Philip. iii. 9.)

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## JUSTIFICATION.

"In the act of justification, there is nothing else in man that hath part or place but faith alone, apprehending the object, which is Christ crucified, in whom is all the worthiness and fulness of our salvation."—PATRICK HAMILTON.

## I.—JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

Justification by the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us of God, and received by faith without works, is a grand truth frequently asserted in the Scripture, (1 Cor. i. 30 ; Rom. iii. 21—28.) That we are justified without works appears : (1.) From the opposition shown to exist between the faith by which we are justified, and works, (Gal. ii. 16.) (2.) From the incongruity there is between the grace through which we are justified, and works, (Rom. iv. 4 ; xi. 6.) (3.) From the design of God, which is to take away all boasting from the creature, and to exalt His own grace, (Rom. iii. 27 ; Eph. ii. 8, 9.) Further : we are justified not

only without works done in compliance with the ceremonial law, but likewise without works done in obedience to the moral law. This appears from the Apostle's excluding in this case that law which was to *abide*, (Rom. iii. 21.) Besides, all our righteousness being imperfect, renders us liable to the curse of the law, *i. e.*, of the moral law, (Gal. iii. 10; Deut. xxvii. 15—26.)

Nor are only moral works, performed by the power of nature before conversion, excluded in point of justification; but those also performed after conversion, through the aid of the Spirit. This the Apostle asserts in opposition to the Galatians, who were converted, and had received the Spirit through the hearing of faith. Neither are we justified by works in conjunction with the righteousness of Christ. For, either the righteousness and merit of Christ is perfect or not;—if perfect, as indeed it is, (Heb. x. 14; Col. ii. 10,) then there is no need of our righteousness;—if not, our imperfect righteousness cannot make



it complete. Those who went about to seduce the Galatians, acknowledged the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ, for they were such as believed, (Acts xv. 5.) The Galatians also, themselves, did the same; otherwise there would have been no force in that expression of the Apostle: "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," (Gal. ii. 21.) Certainly they at least gave Christ's merits and death some share in their justification, with their works: yet against such works doth the Apostle argue. Neither are we justified by faith as it is a *habit*; that is, as it is a holy quality infused into the soul by God, and abiding or dwelling in us. For in that case we should be justified by *inherent* righteousness, *i. e.*, by a righteousness within us; but the righteousness by which we are justified, is a righteousness without us, (Phil. iii. 9.) Faith, as a grace implanted in the soul, is a part of sanctification: but our justification is distinct from our

sanctification, (Rom. v. 19 ; 1 Cor. vi. 11.) The one is implanted in us ; the other is imputed to us. Nor are we justified by faith as a *work* ; for works, not less of the Gospel than of the Law, are excluded, (Rom. xi. 5, 6.) And the righteousness by which we are justified is not a work of our own, but a righteousness wrought out by another. Nor yet are we justified by faith, as though *it* was accepted of God, in the place of fulfilling the law, and that either freely, or through the merit of Christ, as even faith itself is imperfect. We believe but in part ; but God justifieth in a way of righteousness, upon a valuable consideration, (Rom. iii. 25, 26.) Faith bears no proportion to the righteousness of the law ; but the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified, is such a righteousness as bears a full proportion to the righteousness of the law, (Rom. viii. 3.) Take heed, therefore, lest by asserting or mixing works, either in whole or in part, in point of justification, you not only doc-

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trinally but practically declare the grace of God to be useless, and the death of Christ to have been in vain, but eventually and experimentally find it to be so as regards yourself, (*See Rom. ix. 31, 32.*)

## II.—JUSTIFICATION PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED.

Many who are clear in the doctrinal part of justification, fail in the practical part. They acknowledge justification not to be of works, but by grace, yet live as if they were to be justified by works. They do this :—

1. When they find the chief ground of their acceptance with God rather in what they are and do than in what Christ is and has done. True it is, that as God accepts the persons, so also the offerings of His people ; yet both persons and services are accepted, not for any worthiness in them, but for the alone worthiness of Christ.

2. When they have recourse principally to the frame of their hearts, and

the course of their lives, for peace and comfort, and not chiefly to Christ. True, the blessed fruits of justification in us, and held forth by us, are matters of comfort, so far as they bear testimony to the truth of our justification; but the spring of our rejoicing should be in Christ Jesus.

3. When they think that, according to the steadiness or unsteadiness of their walking, they are more or less justified. It is true, as to the manifestation of our justification to our own souls, that it clouded, or cleared according to the frame of our hearts and the course of our lives; but in itself it is still the same. And though we are to be humbled for our own unsteady walking, and should make it our study to walk holily and live fruitfully; yet we should consider that neither the goodness of our works can add any thing to our justification, nor the defects thereof impair it; because our works are not concerned therein. Our righteousness is out of ourselves and in another whose right-

eousness is everlastingly the same. If therefore you acknowledge justification to be of grace, see that you neither set up works in the room of Christ, nor in conjunction with Him. "If it be of grace it is no more of works," (Rom. xi. 6.)

### III.—FAITH JUSTIFYING AND JUSTIFIED.

When it is said that God "justifieth the ungodly," (Rom. iv. 5,) it must be understood of such persons as were ungodly, not of those who remain so. God justifieth the ungodly *objectively*, not *subjectively*. Such as were ungodly till they were justified, but being justified do not remain ungodly. Where righteousness is imputed, there holiness is imparted: for though these are separable in the point of justification, they are inseparable in the party justified. The Apostle reminds the Corinthians that they "were" ungodly; "but" now, he adds, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the

spirit of our God," (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Those whom Christ justifieth, He sanctifieth : and they who have His righteousness imputed to them, have also His Spirit imparted to them. Though by faith we are to look out of ourselves for the justification of our persons, we are to look into ourselves for the justification of our faith.

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## FAITH.

"The steps of Faith  
Fall on the seeming void, and find  
The Rock beneath."

WHITTIER.

"This is the call of the Gospel:—He that dares trust Christ with his soul upon the warrant of the Gospel, shall be saved for ever. The Lord tries His people this way. We have no more to do, but to take pen in hand, and say, 'Amen O Lord; it is a good bargain and a true word, and I will trust my soul with it.' *This is believing.*"

ROBERT TRAIL.

## I.—THE LIFE OF FAITH.

As the Christian is made alive through faith, so he is to live by faith. For as it is that life which brings most glory to God, by laying the creature low in the sense of his indigence, and most highly exalts God from the sight of His all-sufficiency; so it is that life which is most in accordance with our present state. A Christian has many of his mercies in hope, not in hand; in promise, not in possession: and there-

fore he has need to live in the exercise of faith, which gives a *being* to absent mercies, as if they were present. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews (verse 1) you have a description of faith as that grace by which we live. It is there called "the substance of things hoped for," as it gives a substantiality and present subsistence to things which exist as yet only in the promise; and it is "the evidence"—the clear demonstration and full conviction of the reality—"of things not seen."

The faith of Abraham so realized Christ's day, that he rejoiced at it as though he had lived in it, (John viii. 56;) and, as our mercies lie out of our hand in the promise, so our life and grace are laid up in another, even in Christ. Adam had all his stock put into his hands at once; but, like a prodigal, he wasted all, and brought both himself and us to beggary and ruin. God hath therefore laid up our life in Christ. "For," says the Apostle, "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ



in God," (Col. iii. 3.) Our stock is in His hands that so it may be sure; and Christ, in giving it forth, gives it in measure, together with the strength and ability to use it, that so it may not be lost. Let us therefore always live the life of faith, as being that excellent life which is most suitable to our state; so that, by the arms of faith, we may be continually embracing the good things promised to us, and by the hand of faith daily be receiving of the good things laid up for us.

## II.—THE ACTS OF FAITH.

To live by faith is for the soul in the exercise thereof, through a promise, to be continually going forth, depending on and fetching in supplies, with respect to both our spiritual and temporal needs, from God in Christ; according to our necessities and with divine assistance, for the right improvement of the same. The faith by which we must live such a life, is the very same faith by which we were justified. "The

just shall live by his faith," (Hab. ii. 4.) By the same faith whereby he is justified shall he live. It is not said merely that he lives because he is made a partaker of eternal life in his justification; but he lives also because he depends upon God for all his mercies. Faith must here be considered in its different acts, exercised upon the same object, but under different conditions. Faith, as it justifieth, respects Christ and His death, Christ and his righteousness, and accordingly 'closeth with Him. Faith, as that grace by which we live, respects Christ and His fulness, Christ and His faithfulness, Christ and His all-sufficiency, and applies itself to him accordingly. Therefore to live this life of faith upon Christ, three things are necessary:—(1.) To be well stored with promises, to warrant our going to Him with our particular wants. (2.) To have clear views of Him; so as to act faith upon Him. (3.) To lay hold on such suitable attributes as are ascribed to Him, so as to strengthen our faith in

what we apply for, (1 Thess. v. 23 ; 1 Pet. v. 10.)

### III.—FAITH WITHOUT SENSE.

Believers are too often like Thomas, who would not believe unless he might have something of sense to assist his faith. From sense and feeling he would ascend to believing ; whereas we should believe that we may attain to sense and feeling. "I have put my trust in the Lord, that so I may declare all thy works," (Ps. lxxiii. 28.) He first trusts God, and then finds experiences to declare. "We walk by faith, not by sight ;" and therefore we must believe in the absence of sense, not only natural but spiritual. But how contrary do many walk to this ! While God smiles, they believe He is their God ; while they find sin subdued, they believe their state to be good ; while they find grace flourishing, they believe it to be right and true ; while they find Christ embracing them, they believe He is theirs. But, under frowns, you must believe

that God may smile ; under prevailing corruptions, you must believe that lust may be subdued, (Ps. lxx. 3 ;) under the languishing of grace, that grace may be strengthened ; and under doubts of your interest in Christ, that so He may be thine. We must not only say we taste and see that the Lord is good, and therefore we trust Him ; but, in the want of this, we will trust Him ; that so we may taste and see His goodness.

#### IV.—FAITH WITHOUT ASSURANCE.

Some sincere souls fear they have no faith, because they have no comfort, especially while considering such passages as these : “ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” (Rom. v. 1.) “ He that believeth hath the witness in himself,” (1 John v. 10.) “ If I had faith,” says the poor soul, “ I should have peace ; if I were a believer, I should have the witness of it ; but I have not.” Let such consider, that though there cannot be assurance without faith, yet there may be faith without

assurance. Faith is not only in the habit, but in the exercise—not only weak faith, but strong faith. So was it with David, Jonah, Job, and other worthies.

It is not said that, being justified by faith, we have peace *in ourselves*—the immediate comfort of it; but, being justified by faith, we have peace *with God*. We are no longer in a state of enmity, but in a state of peace. There is the peace of reconciliation, and the peace of consolation. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God; we are under the peace of reconciliation, and what true peace of consolation a soul hath flows from faith. And whereas it is said, “he that believeth hath the witness in himself;” the meaning is not, that upon his believing it is always immediately witnessed to him that Jesus Christ is his; experience declares the contrary. But the meaning is, that by believing he witnesseth the same that the Father doth;—that Christ is the Son of God, and that life and salvation

are to be had by Him alone. Or, that he hath that in himself by which the Spirit beareth witness of an interest in Christ;—he is justified, sanctified, and made partaker of those graces of the Spirit, by which, if diligently cultivated, he may grow up to assurance and attain comfort. Try not, therefore, thy faith by thy comfort, but thy comfort by thy faith. You may have true faith without comfort, but you cannot have true comfort without faith.

#### V.—FAITH AND DOUBTS.

Satan is such an enemy to the saints, that if he cannot hinder their salvation, he will strive to hinder their consolation, that so he may weaken their hands and enfeeble their knees. One way is by filling them with doubts, and then leading them to question the goodness of their state, because of those doubts. Hence it often happens that gracious souls question whether they have any faith, because they have so many doubts. Whereas, on the contra-

ry, if they had no doubts, they might well question whether they had faith. If all were in peace, it would be a strong argument that "the strong man" still had possession: but for doubts to be stirring in the heart, is a sign that there is a contrary principle—namely, faith—which these war against. Regenerate persons are partly flesh and partly spirit; and faith and doubts, though opposite in themselves, may be in the same person with respect to each of those parts. Christ said to Peter, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matt. xiv. 31.) And again we read, "And the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," (Mark ix. 24.) In the midst of his unbelief, he asserts his belief; and Christ owns Peter's little faith in the midst of his great fears. Be careful, therefore, that thou dost not doubt thy faith, though that faith be accompanied with doubts. Bemoan thy doubts, but own thy faith.

## VI.—THE ADVANTAGE OF STRONG FAITH.

As growth in grace supplies a comfortable evidence of the truth of it, so is it of great advantage as to the use of it. The Church of Thessalonica was eminent for growth in grace, particularly the graces of faith, love, and patience; and therefore it was eminent in working, labouring, waiting, and suffering for Christ. On the contrary, in the Church of Sardis, as their graces were languid, so their works were imperfect, (Rev. iii. 2.) Little grace is not equal to much work; weak grace is not fit to encounter strong corruptions; nor small grace to bear sharp trials; nor feeble grace to wait for promised mercies. We have need, therefore, to get all the grace we can; for we know not how soon we may need all the grace we can get.

## VII.—DYING BY FAITH.

As it is the duty of the saints to live by faith, so also to die in faith. The



Scripture speaking of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, saith, "These all died in faith," (Heb. xi. 13.) To die in faith, is to die resigning our spirits into the hands of Christ. Thus Stephen died: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," (Acts vii. 59.) To die in faith, is to die believing the accomplishment of all the promises, as yet unfulfilled, relating either to ourselves or the church of God. Thus Jacob died: "Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers," (Gen. xlviii. 21.) Thus Joseph died: "God," said he, "will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from hence," (Gen. l. 25.) To die in faith, is to die believing that death is ours, as much as life or any of the good things we enjoy in it, (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.) To die in faith, is to die in and to Christ. As to live by faith, is to live unto the Lord; so to die in faith is to die unto the Lord, (Rom. xiv. 8.) To die in faith, is to die, not from necessity but from duty.

Aaron was to go up to mount Hor and die there; and though in the sight of the people he was to be stripped of his priestly garments, yet he obeys. It is said: "And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the Lord, and died there," (Num. xxxiii. 38.) So Moses was to go up to mount Nebo, and die there, (Deut. xxxii. 50;) and this, being the commandment of the Lord, he obeys, (chap xxxiv.) To die in faith, is to die not from force but from choice. "I desire," saith Paul, "to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better," (Phil. i 23.) If then you would die in faith, be dying daily by faith. Let that be done now in the frame of your heart, which is to be done at the close of your life.

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## REPENTANCE.

“Repentance!—what is life  
But matter fit for tears?  
Since all we are is rife  
With worse than what appears:  
If tried without, men are but sin,  
Yet God doth weigh the heart within!”  
R. MONTGOMERY.

## I.—THE GRACE OF REPENTANCE.

As sin is the greatest evil, so sorrow for sin is the greatest sorrow. Though *baldness* was forbidden the people of God in sorrowing for the dead, (Deut. xxi. 5;) yet this, or what is equivalent to it, is commanded in mourning for sin, (Isa. xxii. 12.) And though many times God's people may find a greater flow of sorrow for temporal losses than they do for sin, (for nature helps us to mourn for the one, but hinders us in mourning for the other; and, moreover, natural evils lying nearer to us affect the senses;) yet godly sorrow in a saint is the greatest sorrow, being tha<sup>t</sup>

which *flows from faith*, whereby we see sin to be the greatest evil, as exemplified in the crucified Saviour. It is also the greatest sorrow, if you consider *the principle from which it flows*. Worldly sorrow is like a land flood, which has no spring to feed it; but godly sorrow is a stream fed by a living spring. As every act of faith arises from a principle of faith, and every act of love from a principle of love; so every act of this mourning from a principle of mourning; namely, from the grace of godly sorrow which is preserved in the soul by the Spirit. And therefore godly sorrow must be the greatest, because *what it wants in present perfection it makes up in perseverance*. Worldly sorrow is a dying sorrow; but godly sorrow is an increasing sorrow. If, then, you would judge of the reality of godly sorrow, judge of it by the greatness thereof; and, if you would judge of the greatness of it, judge not of it by what it is in the sensitive faculty, but by what it is in the rational—not how the outward, but

how the inward man stands affected—not by what it is in appearance, but by what it is in its principle and continuance.

## II.—REPENTANCE RENEWED.

Repentance must be a continued work ; so long as we have sin to repent, of, so long we must be repenting of sin and by after acts the work of repentance comes to be more distinctly, methodically, and evangelically carried on than it was at the first. (1.) A child of God, from a continued *experimental sense of the indwelling and working of sin*, comes to be more thoroughly convinced of the root, nature, evil, and aggravation of sin ; and to feel the weight, load, and pressure of it, more burdensome than he did. So David in Psal. ii. and Paul in Rom. vii. (2.) Again, *the believer's sorrow for sin becomes more evangelical* than formerly ; for whereas, before there was much of self-love and fear of wrath and hell in his mourning ; now, having a clear view of the love of God in pardoning him, and being pacified

towards him, and of the distinguishing grace and favour of God extended to him, he comes to mourn, loathe, and abase himself more deeply than before, and to melt with filial sorrow before the Lord, that he should act so unworthily and unthankfully towards a gracious, tender, and loving Father.—(See Ezek. xvi. 63.) (3.) Again, by after acts *the believer's hatred of sin becomes more refined*. He hates it on account of its defiling nature, as well as its damning nature—for the evil that is in it, as well as for the evil that comes by it; not only because it is ruinous, but because it is unrighteous. In turning from sin, as he turns from all sins, so he turns from them all as grievous to the Spirit, as well as injurious to his own peace; as what hinders his communion, as well as spoils his comfort. Nor does he only turn from sin, but also from his own righteousness. He feels himself to be undone, not only with respect to sinful self, but righteous self, (Isa. vi. 5.) (4.) Once more, by these

repeated acts, the believer *becomes more spiritual in his returning to God*. He turns more and more to Him *as in Christ*, and he turns to Him from a sight of His excellency, as well as from the sense of his own necessity. He turns to God as the Most High, (Hos. vii. 16.) Not only the Most High in Himself, but the most high in his esteem. He turns to Him not only out of want, but out of choice ; as the desire, delight, and centre of his soul ; and therefore he turns to Him with his whole soul. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee ?" is his language ; "and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee," (Ps. lxxiii. 25.) Would you therefore improve your repentance as to the regulation and manifestation thereof ? Then, according to Gospel light and love, be often in the renewed acts of it. Let that be frequently done, which is the better for being done frequently.

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## SPIRITUAL LIFE.

“Real religion is neither more nor less than the life of God in the soul of man.”

RICHARD CECIL.

## I.—SPIRITUAL LIFE A REALITY.

GREAT as is the difference between a soul quickening and assuming a body, so great is the difference between professors acting from an indwelling principle of life, and those who act only from outward aid and assistance. The angels that appeared to Abraham, and likewise to Lot, in human shape, could not be called living men. Though in these assumed bodies they ate, drank, walked, discoursed, and reasoned as men; yet it was but from a form assumed, not quickened: there was no inward principle of life. So many, through common helps, may act like children of God; they may pray, preach, give alms and the like, and yet they are not living saints, because they have no inward vital principle enlivening them.



Spiritual life is the result of the soul's union with Christ, whereby, through the indwelling of Christ's Spirit in the soul, such holy, saving qualities are diffused throughout all its faculties, that they are capacitated for, inclined to, and exercised in, spiritual operations. If, therefore, thou wouldest judge of thy spiritual life, consider not only what thou doest, but from what principle thou doest it.

## II.—CHRIST OUR LIFE.

A believer may be said to live, and yet not to live: "I live," says Paul; "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," (Gal. ii. 20.) He may be said to live: (1.) Because he is really made a partaker of a principle of life. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," (Eph. ii. 1.) "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life," \* (1 John v. 12.) (2.) Be-

\* Not simply "life," but "THE life," (τὴν ζωὴν) i. e., the life of Christ. See John vi. 53—57.—  
EDITOR.

cause he is the seat and subject in which this life doth reside and abide. "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith," (Eph. iii. 17.) It is the heart of the believer in which Christ the fountain of life dwells. (3.) Because God uses the natural faculties of the believer's soul in living this life. These faculties of the soul are essentially the same after conversion as before, only renewed, purified, and spiritualized. The *understanding* is quickened, being savingly enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things. The *will* is enlivened, being savingly humbled to the will of God. The *affections* are rectified, being graciously called forth to right objects: and the *conscience* is regulated, being made pure and powerful in the execution of its office. But though thus rectified they are all essentially the same.

But the believer may be said not to live, because it is Christ who liveth in him. He is the principle, the spring, the root, and the fountain of this life.

He it is that is the Author and Giver of all grace. He maintains the grace He gives; quickens the grace He maintains; actuates the grace He quickens, and perfects the grace he actuates.

Seeing, therefore, that you are in the hands of Christ, not as senseless matter in the hand of an artist, but as a living child in the hand of a father; seeing that He makes use of the faculties of your soul, at least instrumentally, for the carrying on of that which He himself works efficaciously: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," (Phil. ii. 12, 13.)

Again; what Paul said of himself: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" that may every believer, the weak as well as the strong, say of himself. The same Christ liveth in me that lived in Paul. A right improvement of this, by faith, would conduce greatly to the edification of a saint. Thou complainest that corruptions are strong, tempta-

tions many, grace weak, and comforts low; yea, thou fearest thou hast no grace, because not so much as many others have. But why shouldest thou sit down with Hagar weeping, because there is no water in the bottle; while there is enough in the fountain, and that fountain near thee, yea, *in* thee? For the Spirit of Christ in the soul is indeed "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," (John iv. 14.) The same Christ from whom the strongest saint has received all his strength, the most fruitful saint all his fruitfulness, the most active saint all his liveliness, and the most successful saint all his victories;—that same Christ liveth in thee. Let thy soul, then, live more in Christ, that so thou mayest the more experience Christ's living in thy soul.

### III.—THE EXCELLENCY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

The spiritual life, though a hidden, is a real life. Those only deny it who are strangers to it. But that there is

such a life, is manifest from its vigorous actings. When natural life is lowest, and the outward man perishing, there is the renewal of the inward man, (2 Cor. iv. 16.) Its reality may be inferred, (1.) From the high esteem the saints have of it; being willing to "bear in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in their mortal flesh," (2 Cor. iv. 10.) Not loving their natural lives unto the death, if so be that they may preserve their spiritual life. (2.) From the care also that they take to nourish it, by feeding upon that living bread which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

And as it is a real, so is it also an *excellent* life—a life of the noblest extraction. Those who partake of it are born from above—born of the Spirit—born of God! It is also a life of the choicest endowments; giving light to the understanding, rectitude to the will, spirituality to the affections, and regularity to the whole soul. It is a life

also of the most exalted aims ; having the enjoyment of God for its chief good, and the living to God as its great end. In a word, it is a life of the highest perfection, being the life of God—the life of Christ ;—both head and members living one and the same life. And as it is an excellent, so is it a durable life ; being “hid with Christ in God ;” *i. e.*, laid up and secured “in Christ” the head of all divine influence ; and “in God,” the fountain of all spiritual life. If, therefore, God hath set up in thy soul the light of *reason*, bless Him for that, but rest not in it without the light of *life*, (John viii. 12.) It is a mercy to be alive in the world as a rational creature ; but herein lieth thy happiness—to be made “alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” (Rom. vi. 11.) And though in the world thou mayest, with Christ, be despised and rejected of men, yet, “when Christ who is thy life shall appear, then shalt thou also appear with Him in glory,” (Col. iii. 4.)

## THE CHRISTIAN.

"He is but half a Christian who is an orthodox believer, if he be not practical also: and he is but half a Christian who is practical, if he be not an orthodox believer."

GEORGE GILLESPIE, 1649.

## I—THE CHRISTIAN'S WAY OF ACCESS.

BELIEVERS under the Gospel "have boldness, and access with confidence, through faith in Christ," (Eph. iii. 12.) Christ leads them as by the hand into the presence of the Father, where they have freedom to make known all their wants, with confidence of success. Under the law, only the High Priest, and that once a year, was to enter into the Holy of Holies. But now the saints, who are priests unto God, may come with boldness into the holy place daily, "by a new and living way, which is consecrated for them, through the veil; that is to say, the flesh of Christ," (Heb. x. 20.) "*A new way*:" the word signifies that which is newly slain; re-

ferring to the sacrifice of Christ as that which remains always in full force, as if He were but newly slain. Christ, through the efficacy of His blood, hath opened a way of access, and keeps it open for the saints, as though that blood were but newly shed. Again, it is called "*a living way*:" a way wherein the saints are quickened by the Spirit, and through which they are made more lively. "Your hearts shall live that seek God," (Psal. lxix. 32.) Let those, therefore, who have an interest in this privilege come, as with reverence so with boldness, to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. As by the assistance of the Spirit they will find it a living way; so through the blood of Christ they will find it a prevailing way.

## II.—THE CHRISTIAN A CHILD OF LIGHT.

When men would dignify persons it is customary to attribute such titles to them as are derived from light: as, "Most



Splendid," "Most Serene," "Most Illustrious;" titles frequently misapplied, for how often are they ascribed to the sons of darkness! We read of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, or *Antiochus the Illustrious*; whereas the Holy Ghost, speaking of the same person, as some conclude, calls him "a vile person," (Dan. xi. 21.) Such titles, therefore, declare what their owners should be, rather than what they are. If light then be so glorious, surely the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; yea, the most excellent in all the earth, (Prov. xii. 26; Ps. xvi. 3.) They are, not in title only but in truth, said to be "light in the Lord," (Eph. v. 8.) They are called by the Holy Ghost himself, "children of the light and of the day," (1 Thess. v. 5.) Let your dignity, therefore, engage you to your duty. Are you children of light? Walk as children of light.

### III.—THE CHRISTIAN'S CONVERSATION.

It is one thing to have a good conversation in the world, and another to

have a good conversation in Christ. Paul, while a Pharisee, had a good conversation in the account of the world, while he walked, according to the law, blameless; but it was not a good conversation in Christ, for he was then a persecutor of Him.

To have a good conversation in Christ requires :—(1.) Union with and implan-tation into Christ. The tree must be good before the fruit can be good. There may be the doing of that which is materially good upon the stock and root of old Adam; but we cannot do that which is spiritually good till we are cut off from that stock, and grafted into Christ.

(2.) A good conversation in Christ is a conversation flowing from the re-generating work of Christ in the heart;—a new spiritual man formed in our spirits. It must be a walking from a new principle wrought in the soul, called a “serving in the newness of the Spirit,” (Rom. vii. 6.) There must be a new creation before there can be

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a good conversation. We must be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," before our works can be wrought in God, (Eph. ii. 10.)

(3.) A good conversation in Christ arises from a good conscience: "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ," (1 Pet. iii. 16.) A good conscience is a conscience purged by the blood of Christ from the guilt of sin, and cleansed by the Spirit of Christ from the power of sin.

(4.) To have a good conversation in Christ is, by faith, to be in and drawing virtue from Christ through the whole course of our lives: to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," (2 Tim. ii. 1.) Not in our own inherent strength, or in the strength of habitual grace received; but to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," (Eph. vi. 10;) deriving from Christ, as our vital Head and quicken-

ing principle, all life, motion, and renewing influences of spirit and grace, for the carrying on of this conversation.

(5.) A good conversation in Christ is to have our works wrought according to the rule of Christ—freely, cheerfully, and vigorously; from a sense of God's love to us, and from the outflowing of our love to Him, (1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Ps. xl. 8; cxix. 35—110; Rom. xii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 14.)

(6.) A good conversation in Christ is to do what we do in Christ's name. When in the best frame we perform holy duties in the best manner, without relying on them in the least for acceptance with God, but only on Christ's mediation. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him," (Col. iii. 17.)

(7.) A good conversation in Christ, is to direct all we do to a spiritual end. When our natural, civil, moral, relative, and religious actions are so directed, "that God in all things may be glorified

through Jesus Christ," (1 Pet. iv. 11.) Would you, therefore, order your conversation aright, so as to see the salvation of God? Look to it that your works be wrought in God; that is, in God's strength and to God's glory. For, as without acting from Christ as the source of spiritual life; so, without acting to Christ as the object of loving service, all you do will avail you nothing, (John xv. 5.)

#### IV.—THE CHRISTIAN WALKING AT LIBERTY.

The Spirit of God is a spirit of liberty: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," (2 Cor. iii. 17.) Not liberty to sin, but from it, (John viii. 34—36.) And in reference to the law, not liberty from obedience, but to it, (Rom. vi. 17, 18.) And this the Spirit works by slaying the natural enmity of the heart against the law; by enlightening the understanding as to the holiness, spirituality, and excellency of it; and by renewing our nature,

putting this law in our inward parts, and writing it in characters of love upon our hearts. Thus working dispositions, inclinations, qualities, and motions suitable to it, raising our affections to delight in it, and so framing the will to the observance of it, that thereby the soul becomes free to righteousness, and is enlarged to run the way of God's commandments; going forth filially, readily, and heartily, as far as renewed, to observe the commandments of God as those of a loving, gracious, tender Father, who hath freed us from the terror, rigour, malediction, and condemnation of the law. So that a believer, though dead to the law as a covenant of works, is yet to live according to the law as a rule of obedience. Though it be useless, through the weakness of the flesh, as to our justification; yet through the Spirit it is useful as to our conversation. Though we are freed from its irritating and provoking power, so that it does not stir up and increase sin in us, as it

does accidentally in wicked men; yet we are under it as to its directing and regulating power.

Thus, though we be delivered from the curse of the law, yet not from its command; though freed from its rigour, not from its rule; though escaped from its condemnation, not from its observation. It is that which Christ hath expounded and confirmed, (Matt. v. 17, 18;) which faith hath set up and established, (Rom. iii. 31;) which the Spirit of God writes in the heart, and gives strength to obey, (Ps. cxix. 97;) and which the saints of God delight in and conform to, (Rom. vii. 22, 25.) It is that which is holy, just, and good; and very useful to Gospel ends:—to discover the nature of God, that we may be holy as He is holy;—to discover the excellency of Christ, who has brought in everlasting righteousness, answerable to the perfection of the law, that we may value and esteem it;—to discover our sins and imperfections, that we may be humbled for them,

and mortified to them; and thus live more in communion with the power and strength of Christ, without whom we can do nothing, and through whom we are enabled to do all things. In obedience to it, we are to testify our thankfulness for grace received, and by obedience to that grace we are fitted for the glory to be revealed. Therefore, from a spirit of liberty as your principle, go forth to an evangelical observance of the law as your duty, (James ii. 12.)

#### V.—THE CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH IN GRACE.

That grace is of a growing nature is beyond all question, but *how* it groweth is the question. It may be said to grow: (1.) By being more firmly rooted. (2.) By addition of new measures and degrees. (3.) In its liveliness and activity.

(1.) The growth of grace is evinced by its being more firmly rooted. The apostle Paul, when writing to the



Ephesians that they were partakers of the grace of love, and also of the saving knowledge of the love of God in Christ, exhorts them to be *rooted and grounded therein*; that so, by reason of this growth, *they "might be filled with all the fulness of God,"* (Eph. iii. 17—19.) And the same Apostle, writing to the Colossians, who had faith in Christ, would yet have their faith stablished, that so they might abound, by being rooted in Christ, (Col. ii. 7.) And St. Peter, also, prays for those to whom he wrote, that God would "*make them perfect, strengthen, stablish, settle them,*" (1 Peter v. 10.)

(2.) As to growth in grace by the addition of new measures and degrees thereof, we read of those that have faith and hope, but who are yet exhorted to press on to a full assurance, (Heb. vi. 11; x. 22.) The apostle Peter also stirs up the saints to whom he wrote, to "give all diligence to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to

temperance patience, and to patience godliness," &c., (2 Pet. i. 5—7.) Not as though they were destitute of any of these graces; for the new creature comes into the world, like all other creatures, with a perfection of parts though not of degrees. Therefore, as they were to add one grace to another by the exercise of every grace; so, I apprehend, new degrees to the same grace; "for," it follows, "if these things be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," (ver. 8.)

(3.) Grace grows when it is more lively, active, and operative: when faith becomes working faith; love, labouring love; hope, patient hope; and patience has its perfect work, (1 Thess. i. 3; James i. 4.) Would you then know whether you have the truth of grace? labour after growth in grace: And would you grow in grace? then be careful that the grace you have be strengthened and established, and those degrees that are lacking be supplied and per-

fect, and every grace be active and exercised.

## VI.—THE CHRISTIAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

As all believers are justified by one and the same righteousness, so all believers have an equal interest in that righteousness. The robe of Christ's righteousness is like His garment, which was without seam. It is not divided, part to one saint and part to another, but the *same* to all the saints, and the *whole* to each saint. It is imputed to all alike. The same righteousness, and all that righteousness which was imputed to Abraham, is imputed to every believing child of Abraham, (Rom. iii. 22.) And that hand of faith which receives it, though weak, does as really receive it as that which is strong. How great a consolation is it to a poor soul, labouring after the same degrees of grace that were in Abraham, David, Paul, and others, and yet cannot attain them, that though they and other saints may excel him in holiness, yet neither they nor

any other saints can excel him for righteousness !

### VII.—THE CHRISTIAN'S HOLINESS.

Those who walk in the ways of holiness receive a reward, not only when they come to the end, but while they are in the way ; “ In keeping of (God’s commandments) there is great reward,” (Ps. xix. 11.) Take the way of God, as it consists in the way of ordinances, or in the way of the exercise of grace, or in the way of obedience, and you will find a reward *in* the work as well as *for* it. In the way of ordinances, there is a reward in the careful attendance upon God in His public ordinances : “ We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple,” (Ps. lxxv. 4.) “ They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house,” (Ps. xxxvi. 8.) And so in private ordinances ;—in *meditation*, marrow and fatness flow into the soul, (Ps. lxxiii. 5, 6 ;)—in *prayer*, strength and quickening is experienced, (Ps.

cxxxviii. 3; xxii. 26.) Again, in the exercise of grace there is a reward in the work. Hear what the Scripture saith of the soul in the exercise of faith and love: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," (1 Pet. i. 8.) It is a joy expressed by outward actions, as dancing and the like. While the soul is in the exercise of faith and love, it is filled with joy—great joy—unspeakable joy—a joy not to be declared by words—a joy the experience of which cannot be expressed. It is called a joy "full of glory," or a glorified joy, of the same kind with the joy of the glorified state. By the exercise of faith and love, the soul has prelibations of that future joy which it shall have in glory: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," (ver. 9.) A metaphor taken from wrestlers, who, after the victory, take and bring the prize out of the field. The soul, in the exercise of grace, rejoices as one

who has won the prize, receiving even now that salvation in the first-fruits which shall be perfected in glory. Once more, take the way of obedience, as it consists in doing the will of God, and you will find there is a being "blessed in our deed," (James i. 25.) Or take it as it consists in suffering the will of God, and of such you will find it said, "the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them," (1 Pet. iv. 14.) The glorious Spirit of God rests in a glorious manner upon His suffering ones. Wouldst thou then be truly happy, labour to be thoroughly holy; keep close to the ways of heaven, so shalt thou find a heaven in those ways.

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## DUTY.

**"Duties are ours: events are God's. This removes an infinite burden from the shoulders of a miserable, tempted, dying creature. On this consideration only, can he securely lay down his head and close his eyes."**

**RICHARD CECIL.**

### **I.—DUTY PROMOTING DUTY.**

**THE great duty of a saint is to trust in God's word, to keep in His way, and to submit to His will. And these are duties which promote each other; for he who rightly believes what God says, will carefully observe what He commands, and quietly rest in what He does. Though there may be darkness in God's providences, he will see light in God's promises, and feel comfort in his duty. On the contrary, he who wants faith in the promises, will soon fail in obedience to the precepts, and be apt to quarrel with God's providences: "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart**

fretteth against the Lord," (Prov. xix. 3.) He who through weakness questions the promise, through foolishness will be prone to pervert his way; and, perverting his way, will be apt to murmur against God's dispensations. Trust, therefore, in the Lord and do good, if thou wouldest find all his dealings to be for good.

## II.—DUTIES AND GRACES.

As different seasons and various conditions demand the exercise of peculiar duties; so peculiar duties call for the exercise of corresponding graces. "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider," (Eccl. vii. 14.) Prosperity calls for rejoicing in God; adversity, for communing with our hearts and considering our ways. When the people of Israel were to keep the day of atonement, they were in an especial manner to afflict their souls, and whatsoever soul was not afflicted in that day, was to be cut off, (Lev. xxiii. 27, 29.) Godly



sorrow was the grace then to be peculiarly exercised. But when they were to feast before the Lord, they were to rejoice, (Deut. xii. 12, 18 ; xvi. 10—14) Spiritual joy was the grace then to be eminently exercised. Consider, therefore, what duties are peculiar to the season and condition in which you are, and what graces to those duties, that so you may fill up your seasons with suitable duties, and your duties with suitable graces.

### III.—DUTIES AND TALENTS.

It should be the great concern with all who profess to be the servants of Christ, to consider what talents God hath given them to improve, and what the special work is that God hath appointed them to do. You may know your talents, by considering what are the inward gifts and graces, together with the outward circumstances and advantages, God hath given you. You may also come to the knowledge of your work by considering the abilities

with which you are furnished, the relations in which you stand, the providences under which you are, the opportunities you enjoy, and the place and time in which you live. We read of God's giving out His talents, appointing to each one *his* work, and of the strict account which must be given of both at the return of the great Lord and Master, (Matt. xxv. 15; Mark xiii. 34.) Wisely consider what God hath done for you, and what you are to do for God; that so you may faithfully improve your talents, and carefully complete your work.

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## INDWELLING SIN.

"Sinne is a basiliske whose eyes are full of venome; if the eye of thy soule see her first, it reflects her own poyson and kills her: if she see thy soul unseen, or seen too late, with her poyson she kills thee: since therefore thou canst not escape thy sinne, let not thy sinne escape thy observation."

FRANCIS QUARLES.

## I.—SIN CRUCIFIED.

UNDER long conflicts with strong corruptions, many are ready to say of their lusts as it was said of the sons of Anak: "Who can stand before the children of Anak?" (Deut. ix. 2;) "we are but as grasshoppers in their sight:" and therefore they are ready to cry out, "We shall one day perish by them." Thus, when we should above all take the shield of faith, we are most ready to drop it.

But for your encouragement in this arduous warfare, consider: (1.) That if

a believer, all thy lusts are already crucified in thy Head: "All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," (Isa. liii. 6.) There is not one carnal affection, disorderly passion, or prevailing corruption stirring in thee, but met upon Christ and was crucified in Him. He died for it, that we might die to it; and therefore in Christ we may reckon ourselves to be "dead indeed unto sin." (2.) Consider that all thy sins are crucified in the promise: though they may be strong, impetuous, violent, yet God hath promised to subdue them. (3.) All thy sins are crucified *initially*: there is a principle of grace implanted in thee, that is crucifying them even now; and, though sin may sometimes prevail, yet thou art crucified to the love and liking of it. (4.) All thy sins shall be crucified *totally*. As they are now completely crucified in thy Head, so they shall be perfectly crucified in thy person. As they are initially crucified, so they shall

be finally destroyed. Not only the motions, but the very being of sin shall be rooted out. Be strong then in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Though the conflict may be sharp, the victory shall be sure.

## II.—SUCCESSFUL MORTIFICATION.

Many persons have little success in attempting to mortify sin, either because they mistake the means, or else fail to exercise faith in the means. Many mistake the means ; betaking themselves to resolutions, vows, fastings, or some severe course of living, which may be useful in its right place, but forgetting that there is a more spiritual and evangelical way which we should first have recourse to ; namely, the blood, Spirit, and word of Christ. Others, though they do not mistake the means, yet miscarry for want of exercising faith in those means. Faith must first apply the virtue of Christ's death, derive power from His Spirit, and efficacy

from His word, for the killing of sin. Faith takes a view of the love of Christ and of his example in dying, thus deriving motives from the one, and a pattern from the other, to die *to* sin, from His dying *for* it. (See Gal. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 21, 24; iv. 1.) Faith views the end and merit of Christ's death, which was not only that sin might be pardoned, but that it might be mortified, (see 1 Tim. ii. 14;) not only that guilt might be removed, but iniquity subdued: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," (Rom. vi. 6.) Faith also hath dependence upon the Spirit, as a Spirit of judgment and burning, (Isa. iv. 4,) for the consumption of corruption, that the heart may be filled with grace, and that grace employed for the crucifixion of sin. Faith also helps the soul to mortify sin, by applying itself to the word, and the word to the soul. The word, mixed with faith, hath great efficacy in this:

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," (John xv. 3.) "By the words of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," (Ps. xvii. 4.) "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to Thy word," (Ps. cxix. 9.) The word is that "sword of the Spirit" which faith makes use of in the slaying of sin. In fighting this good fight of faith, therefore, be careful that you lose not success for want of the right means, or the efficacy of those means for want of active faith.

Again: As, in mourning for sin, we are to consider it in its spring and fountain, and mourn over it there, as David did when he said: "Behold I am shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," (Ps. li. 5 :) so, in mortifying sin, we are to consider it in its root and habit, and strike at it there. For this declares that we hate sin *as sin*; not only open but secret sins; not only this and the other sin, but

every sin; not only the acts and deeds of sin, but the love and liking of it: this, therefore, is the ready way to obtain victory over them. If the cause be taken away, the effect will cease. If you kill sin in the principle, you will destroy it in practice. If, then, you would cut down the branches of sin, cut up its root; and if you would be the death of every sin, labour to destroy the whole body of death. Hence, as the way to put off the deeds of sin is to put off the body of sin, it is said of the Colossians that they "put off the old man with his deeds," (Col. iii. 9;)—first the old man, then his deeds. And, as the way of putting off the old man is by putting on the new; it is further added, "And ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him," (verse 10.) The "old man" is the inbred corruption and indwelling sin of our old nature: the "new man" is the whole body of gracious habits and saving qualities



whereby we are made new.\* Now these are not only in the same subject, (the regenerate man,) but in the same faculties of the same subject, and have a tendency the one to expel the other, as light hath to expel darkness. Would you therefore put off the old man daily? Be putting on the new continually. Growing and increasing in grace, sin will be also gradually weakening and wasting.

### III.—THE BESETTING SIN.

As in mortifying sin we must mortify every sin, since one sin unmortified will break our peace, blot our evidences, harden our hearts, indispose for duty, make way for temptation, and

\* *Practically* our author's definition may be sufficiently correct, yet a profounder theology will recognize in either case a *substratum* in which these qualities inhere. In this more accurate sense, the "old man" is the whole unregenerate nature of man previous to conversion, while the "new man," the "seed of God," (1 John iii. 9) is the new nature received in regeneration.—*Editor.*

incline to our sins ; so we should especially keep ourselves from our own iniquity. Though original sin be alike in all, yet it doth not break forth in all alike : therefore some sins are said to be more particularly *our* sins than others. Thus David saith : "I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity," (Ps. xviii. 23.) As in every human body there is the principle of mortality, yet in some a proneness to one disease rather than to another ; so is it in reference to sin : the temperament, constitution, or disposition of a man, may incline him to one sin more than to another ; so likewise his station in life, the calling in which he is employed, the place where he lives, the times in which his lot is cast, the varied circumstances through which he passes, and the temptations he meets with, may each draw forth some particular sin. Would you, then, have a testimony of the truth of grace and uprightness of your heart with God, make it your business to

mortify every sin, but especially that which may be called *your own* iniquity. One sin may seem to help you to fight against another sin, but it must be sincerity that helps you to fight against *all* sin.

#### 4.—PREVAILING SIN.

Many sincere souls who by faith have truly closed with Christ, question their faith because they find corruption not only working, but sometimes prevailing; whereas, say they, one sign of true faith is that it purifies the heart. But though faith weakens sin, it does not abolish it. The inbeing of faith doth not annihilate the indwelling of sin. Sin will have a being in our nature as long as we have a being in the flesh. Corruptions, sometimes prevailing corruptions, have been found, not only where faith has been in habit but in exercise. Paul saw a law in his members not only warring, but sometimes conquering, yea, and at the very time that faith was acting on Christ's victory,

(Rom. vii. 23, 25.) Under a sense of sin, David cried out: "Iniquities prevail against me," at the very same time when he was lifting up his head by faith; for he adds, "as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away," (Psal. lxxv. 3.) Thou complainest and groanest, thou art burdened with, and fighting against, thy sins. Whence is this but from a contrary principle of grace? Say not, then, thou hast no faith, when indeed thou art fighting the good fight of faith.

#### 5.—CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

It is one thing to be crucified to sin, and another to be crucified with Christ. The Pharisee stood and prayed: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican," (Luke xviii. 11;) and yet he was but a Pharisee. The foolish virgins had escaped much of the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of Christ; and yet they were but foolish still (Matt. xxv. 2; 2 Pet. ii.

20.) To be crucified with Christ is, from union with Him, to have communion in the merit, virtue, and efficacy of His death. Would you, therefore, die to sin from Christ's dying for sin? Look to it, that first by faith you be found in Him; and then, that by faith you improve your fellowship in His sufferings, so that you may be made conformable to His death, (Phil. iii. 10.)

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## COMMUNION WITH GOD.

**"True Christians live beyond their speech,  
And faith is more sublime  
Than syllables of breath can reach,  
Framed out of sense and time."**

**R. MONTGOMERY.**

## I.—COMMUNION A REALITY.

As union with God is the fundamental ground of communion, so conformity to God is the actual ground of fellowship. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," (1 John i. 7.) That is, God with us, and we with God, as in the third verse. This fellowship, though a great mystery, yet is in Scripture clearly proved, and by the experience of the saints fully confirmed. We read of God's drawing nigh to the soul, and the soul's drawing near to God, (James iv. 8.) Of God's walking with the saints, and the saints with God, (2 Cor. vi. 16; Gen. v. 22.) Of God's

speaking to the soul, and the soul's speaking to God, (Ps. xxvii. 8.) And of Christ's supping with His people, and their supping with Him, (Rev. iii. 20.) There is a sweet intercourse and loving converse between Christ and the soul, wherein He communicates His mind, love, and quickening influence to the soul; and the soul makes returns in vigorous acts of grace, warm affections, and lively duties to Christ.

This the men of the world look upon as a dream, nor is it any wonder to hear them deny that which they have never enjoyed. Indeed it cannot be otherwise; for, as in the light of God we must see light, so in the life of God must we live this life. There can be no communion where there is not the same life. Mere sensual creatures cannot have fellowship with rational: when Nebuchadnezzar lost his reason, he lost his fellowship with men, and was driven forth among the beasts. Neither can mere rational creatures have communion with God and Christ, unless they are made par-

takers of spiritual life. There must be conformity and agreement where there is to be fellowship and converse. Hath God, therefore, made thee a partaker of this spiritual privilege?—live in the admiration of distinguishing grace, and say, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (John xiv. 22.)

## II.—COMMUNION MUST BE CULTIVATED.

We read of some as “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,” (2 Tim. iii. 5.) The power of godliness consisteth in the end thereof; and the end of godliness is the enjoyment of communion with God. Now to make only a show, and not to pursue this end, is to deny the power. The power and perfection of grace and duty lieth in the end thereof: the end of faith is to purify the heart; the end of fear is to perfect holiness; the end of prayer is to enjoy communion with God, and influence from Him; the end of hearing is to promote faith and obe-



dience ; and the end of fellowship with the saints is growth and increase of grace. If, therefore, you would be under the influence of the godliness you profess, let "your fruit be unto holiness, and the end" shall be "everlasting life," (Rom. vi. 22.)

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## SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.

"We learn the price of goodliest things through  
losing ;  
They who have sat in darkness bless the light ;  
And sweetest songs have risen to liberty  
From souls once bound in misery and iron."  
DORA GREENWELL.

## I.—WALKING IN DARKNESS.

WITH a sincere soul in its passage to heaven, it may be as with Paul on his voyage to Rome ; he was, we are told, "exceedingly tossed with a tempest, neither sun nor stars in many days appearing, and all hope that he should be saved being taken away," (Acts xxvii. 18, 20.) So the soul, by reason of desertion, temptation, and affliction, may be exceedingly tossed ; neither sun nor stars appearing ; no light from graces, from experience, from God's countenance, or from the covenant of grace ; so that all hope of salvation may seem to be taken away. But though it be so, you have this blessed word to direct

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you to a sure anchorage: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God," (Isa. l. 10.) God is *his* God when He hides His face, as well as when He lifts up upon him the light of His countenance, and though he cannot *see* that God to be his, on whom he is exhorted to stay himself, yet this should be his encouragement, that he is to stay upon that God who acknowledges Himself to be his.

## II.—A SPIRIT OF BONDAGE.

A sincere soul under fears and terrors, is sometimes apt to conclude against himself as one who has not passed from death unto life, because he supposes himself to be under the spirit of bondage, while of the children of God it is said: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," (Rom.

viii. 15.) For although it be true that the Spirit of God in the work of conviction acts as a spirit of bondage, convincing the soul of sin and death, loading it with the curses of the law, and pressing it down with dreadful fears and terrors; yet the Spirit, having thereby rendered sin bitter and Christ desirable, and brought the soul to a saving closing with Him, acts no longer as a spirit of bondage. If, therefore, after such a saving closing with Him, a person comes into bondage, as possibly he may, it is either from the withdrawing of the Holy Spirit from the darkness of his own spirit, or from some impressions of the evil spirit. The Spirit of God, being the Spirit of Truth, never declares to a justified person that he is in a state of wrath, though He may permit Satan or his own heart to work in him (especially if under sin) such misconceptions of himself. In such a condition, therefore, consider what is amiss; mourn over and amend it; deal wisely with yourself, but do not

conclude rashly against yourself: for you may be as one under a spirit of bondage, and yet the bondage may not be of the Spirit.

### III.—A LANGUISHING FRAME.

We should distinguish between a dead frame and a dead state. A child of God may be in a dead frame, though he shall never again be in a dead state. Christ saith to the Church of Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," (Rev. iii. 1;) that is, in a dead frame, for there was something still living, though languishing, which they were to strengthen: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," (verse 2.) Though a child of God shall not fall finally from grace, yet he may fall fearfully from the measure and degree of grace which he once possessed; from the vigour and activity of grace which he once exhibited; from the comfort and assurance of grace which he once enjoyed. He may fall under barrenness and deadness,

he may be under darkness and blindness, so as "not to be able to see afar off, and to forget that he was purged from his old sins," (2 Pet. i. 9.) If he looks backward, he may not be able to see the pardon of his sins, or the change of his nature. If he looks forward, he may not be able to see his interest in heaven and future glory. And, if he looks inward, he may not be able to see the truth of his graces or the sincerity of his heart. Watch, therefore, against whatsoever may predispose to such a frame. Of the wise virgins, as well as of the foolish, it is said, they all slumbered and slept. Take heed of slumbering, lest thou fall to sleeping—of drowsiness, if thou wouldest prevent decay: and daily have recourse to Christ, who came not only that we might "have life," but "that we might have it more abundantly," (John x. 10.) Content not thyself with being a living Christian, unless thou art a lively Christian.

## IV.—QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

In Scripture the Spirit of God is compared to fire. Hence we are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, (1 Thess. v. 19 ;) that is, His gifts, graces, motions, and operations. Now, as fire may be quenched, checked, or extinguished several ways, so may the Spirit.

(1.) Fire may be quenched by throwing upon it a contrary element in greater proportions than it can bear. Thus the Spirit is quenched when we give way to the increase, growth, and breaking forth of lusts and corruptions. Of the children of Israel it is said, "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy," (Isa. lxiii. 10.) (2.) Fire may be quenched by suffocation, through too much fuel being thrown on, so that the draught is stopped. Even so the Spirit, in His holy motions and breathings, is quenched, when we heap up upon the soul the cares, affairs, and concerns of this life, and thus choke

and extinguish His gracious influences. Thus it was with the thorny-ground hearers, (Matt. xiii. 22.) (3.) Fire may be quenched by withdrawing the fuel on which it feeds. Ordinances are the fuel of the Spirit through which He works. To neglect them, therefore, is a sure way of quenching the Spirit. (4.) Fire may be quenched not only when fuel is removed, but when it is withheld. If we would keep alive the motions and operations of the Spirit, we must ever be closing with them, and resigning ourselves up to them, and using every means of promoting them. (5.) Lastly; another way in which fire may be quenched is, by not stirring it up. So when persons have gifts and graces, and will not by exercise stir them up, but allow them to continue in a dull, sleepy habit, this is another way of quenching the Spirit. Paul saith to Timothy: "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God that is in thee," (2 Tim. i. 6.) Some say the word signifies to revive and stir up fire



that is buried under the ashes : or, as Gerhard observes, there is a typical allusion to the priests under the Old Testament, by whose daily ministry the fire which came down from heaven was cherished, that it might not go out. Would you, therefore, not quench the Spirit, let all his inclinations and operations be not only readily entertained and faithfully preserved, but carefully cherished and diligently improved.

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## AFFLICTION.

## I.—AFFLICTION FROM GOD.

“Adversity misunderstood,  
Becomes a double curse;  
Her chastening hand improves the good,  
But makes the wicked worse.  
Thus clay more obdurate becomes,  
To the fierce flame consign’d;  
While gold in the red ordeal melts,  
But melts to be refined.”

COLTON.

GOD is not only the author of affliction permissively, but efficiently. “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos iii. 6.) “I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil,” (Isa. xlv. 7.) Light and peace are put for a state of prosperity—darkness and evil for a state of adversity. So that afflictions are in a sense evil, though not simply and absolutely considered; for thus God cannot be the author of them. But they are evil, (1.) As they are grievous to the flesh. (2.) As they are

the occasion of drawing out the corruptions that are in the heart, such as murmuring, repining, discontent, and the like, unless God overrule them by His grace. (3.) As they give Satan opportunity to introduce his temptations. See, therefore, what great need there is to watch and pray, that so, under the evil of affliction, you may be kept from the evil of sin.

## II.—AFFLICTION PREPARED FOR AND IMPROVED.

As it is the duty of God's children to *prepare* for affliction before it comes, so is it to *improve* affliction when it does come. If we do not prepare for it, we shall be surprised by it; and, if we do not improve it, we are likely to increase it. He who would prepare for affliction must beforehand (1.) resign all to God, (2.) strengthen his graces, (3.) store up promises, (4.) clear up evidences, (5.) recall experiences, (6.) and search out sins. And he who would *improve* affliction, must by its

means labour to see sin more and more in its filthiness, so as to mortify it ; the heart in its deceitfulness, so as to watch over it ; the world in its emptiness, so as to be crucified to it ; grace in its amiableness, so as to prize it ; God in His holiness, so as to fear Him ; and heaven in its desirableness, so as to long after it. Be wanting, then, in neither respect : for he who takes more care to avoid afflictions than to be fitted for them, or is more solicitous to be delivered from them than to be bettered by them, is likely to come soonest into them, and to live longest under them.

### III.—FAULTS UNDER AFFLICTION.

God's children under affliction are apt to let go that which they should hold fast—namely, their assurance ; and to forget what they should particularly remember—namely, the exhortation which speaks to them as children, (Heb. xii. 5 ; ) and to put themselves again under that law from which they are freed, as being under grace. For

though their afflictions be the same in kind as those which the wicked experience; yet God dealeth not with them as under the curse of the law, for the law is satisfied, Jesus Christ himself having been made a curse for them, (Gal. iii. 13.) But God deals with them as under a covenant of grace, in which seasonable rebukes are promised, that his children may not be condemned with the world, (1 Cor. xi. 32.) The afflictions of the wicked are punishments from God as an angry Judge; but the afflictions of the godly are chastisements from God as a gracious Father. The afflictions of the wicked, moreover, are preludes to their future misery; but the corrections of the godly, preparations for their future glory. Under all afflictive dispensations, therefore, hold fast upon God; *call him Father in the furnace*, and keep up honourable thoughts of God as to his dealings; low thoughts of yourself as to your deservings.

#### 4.—THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.

It is easier to see the righteousness of God under our affliction than his goodness; yet God is gracious therein, as well as righteous. "All the paths of the Lord (in reference to His people) are mercy and truth," (Ps. xxv. 10.) God in mercy is fulfilling some of His truths, some faithful promise for our good; and not only so, but His very righteousness is displayed in goodness to His people. He will not suffer them to go on in the way of sin, without seasonable rebukes to bring them again to Himself. If you would, therefore, discern the goodness of God in your affliction, as well as His righteousness, consider not only wherein you deserve it, but also wherein you stand in need of it.

#### V.—TRIBULATION WORKETH PATIENCE.

As in working for God we may do His will, and yet not immediately receive the promised good; so in suffering

from God we may cleanse and purge ourselves, and yet His rod not immediately be removed. This was the Psalmist's complaint: "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain," saith he, "and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning," (Ps. lxxiii. 13, 14.) God would not only have our patience tried, but increased, strengthened, and perfected. He would have us to know that both ability to labour and the reward for labour, the bestowing of good and the removing of evil, is from grace. As, by waiting for mercy, God fits us for the enjoyment of mercy; so, by cleansing and purging under sufferings, He fits us to glorify Him by future sufferings. As, therefore, we have need of patience that, after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise; so have we need of prudence that, having obtained good by affliction, we may glorify God with the good we have obtained.

## PRAYER.

“ A sigh can waft us to God’s feet in prayer,  
Not Gabriel bends with more acceptance there,  
Nor to the throne from heaven’s pure altar rise,  
The odours of a sweeter sacrifice,  
Then when before the mercy-seat we kneel,  
And tell Him all we fear, or hope, or feel.”

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

## I.—ARGUMENTS FOR PRAYER.

As we are to pray continually, so continually to pray in faith. We should therefore frequently be presenting to ourselves those manifold arguments which will raise our faith to a constant belief of this truth, that God will grant a favourable answer to the prayers of His people.

(1.) Arguments may be derived from the blessed attribute of God’s *omniscience*. He knows what things His children have need of before they ask, (Matt. vi. 7, 8 ;) and, because He knows them, therefore he will give them, (ver. 32, 33.) From His *omnipotence*, He is



able to supply His people's wants, (Eph. iii. 20 ;) and, because able, therefore he *will* supply them, (2 Cor. ix. 8.) From his *faithfulness*. The Apostle having prayed for great things for the Thessalonians, adds : "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it," (1 Thes. v. 24.) David pleads this, (Ps. cxliii. 1, 11.) God is also called a prayer-hearing God, (Ps. lxxv. 2 ;) which sets forth the inclination of His nature, and His innate disposition to it.

(2.) From God's common bounty to His creatures, we may conclude His readiness to hear prayers of His children. He who hears the cry of an Ishmael, will surely hear the request of an Isaac, (Gen. xxi. 17.) He that heareth the ravens when they cry—*ravens* are unclean birds—and the young ravens, that have a hoarse voice, will surely listen to the cries of His children, (Ps. cxlvii. 9 ; Luke xii. 24.)

(3.) From the covenant interest He hath in His people, and His people in Him : "Know that the Lord hath set

apart him that is godly for Himself; the Lord will hear when I call upon Him," (Ps. iv. 3.) The covenant interest His people have in God, is also frequently urged by David in prayer.

(4.) From the love that God bears His people: "At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you," (John xvi. 26, 27.) He who hath all the affection that is in the heart of a parent, to give to their children all they need, hath also a pre-eminent love of His own, (Luke xi. 11—13.)

(5.) From His inviting His children to this duty; calling on them, not only in His Word, but by His Spirit in their hearts, to seek His face, (Ps. xxvii. 8.)

(6.) From His delight in the prayers of His people: "The prayer of the upright is His delight," (Prov. xv. 8.) "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely," (Song ii. 14.)

(7.) From His erecting a throne of grace for the very purpose, that He might thence give forth an answer to His people, (Heb. iv. 16.)

(8.) From His giving His Spirit to draw up the petitions of His people for them, that so, being framed according to His will, He might answer them,\* (Rom. viii. 26, 27; Gal. iv. 6.) He who hath given us the Spirit of prayer, will certainly hear the prayers of His own Spirit.

(9.) From His having given to His people the greatest possible mercy—the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Apostle's argument: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) He who gave us the greater mercy before we

\* So HART says in his sweet hymn:—

"The Christian's heart his prayer indites,  
*He speaks as prompted from within;*  
*The Spirit his petition writes,*  
 And Christ, receives and gives it in."

EDITOR.

prayed, will not deny lesser mercies when we pray.

(10.) From His hearing Christ always, who intercedeth for us in virtue of His infinite merits, whereby He hath insured to us all needful mercies.

(11.) From His graciously anticipating the prayers of His children, giving the mercy it was in their hearts to beg. He who thus gives in mercy before they ask, will also give in mercy when they ask, (Isa. lxxv. 24 ; Dan ix. 20—23.)

(12.) From His encouraging command to ask for great things, that their joy may be full. As if they had asked nothing, unless they asked great things, (John xvi. 24.)

*Finally:* From His own glory. God and Christ are glorified in answering prayer, (John xiv. 13.) God will answer prayer, so that His own glory may shine forth therein: "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," (Phil. iv. 13.) Observe: God is able to supply the need of His people, for He

hath "riches" by Him; riches of mercy, (Eph. ii. 4 :) riches of grace, (Eph. iii. 7 :) yea, "exceeding riches of grace," (Eph. ii. 7.) He will also give to His people supplies suitable to His ability; or, as we say, "according to His means : " He "will supply all their need *according* to His riches." He will further abundantly supply the wants of His people, so as to speak forth His glory, "according to the riches of His glory." And, whereas it might be objected, I am unworthy of such rich mercy, it follows, "by Christ Jesus"—by virtue of the worthiness, merit, and obedience of Christ Jesus. Therefore, O believer! though thou art less than the least of the mercies thou needest; yet, through prayer, believe that thou shalt receive the greatest that God hath promised.

## II.—PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT.

Many deny praying in the Spirit, because they want the Spirit to pray with. But that this is the duty and privilege of the saints, the Scripture

testifieth. St. Jude exhorts us to pray "in the Holy Ghost," (verse 20.) And St. Paul tells us, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," (Gal. iv. 6.) It is a sign thou art no son if thou hast not the Spirit of His Son; and, where there is the Spirit of His Son, there will be praying in the Spirit. The Apostle likewise acquaints us that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," (Rom. viii. 26.) In which Scriptures you not only have the truth asserted, that there is such a thing as praying in the Spirit, but are also instructed what this praying in the Spirit is. And (1.) it implies a sense of our need of the Spirit to pray with: "We know not what we ought to pray for as we ought." (2.) It implies a laying low in our own spirits, with the exalting of the Spirit of God in this work:

"The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." We are not only ignorant what we should pray for, but have many infirmities cleaving to us, ready to hinder prayer, against which the Spirit helpeth us, by removing them or disposing us to our duty. To pray in the Spirit is, (3.) to pray according to the dictates and directions of the Spirit: "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." He makes intercession by helping us to intercede, and framing for us regular and pertinent petitions. To pray in the Spirit is, (4.) when there is a holy longing and groaning after the things we pray for. As the Spirit frames our petitions, so He raiseth affections suitable to the petitions He frames, whereby we are filled with "groanings that cannot be uttered." (5.) To pray in the Spirit, is to have the heart engaged in prayer: He hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son "into your heart." (6.) To pray in the Spirit, is to pray with fervency and continuance,—as it were, "crying." (7.) To pray in the Spirit, is

to pray in a child-like frame of heart ; coming to God in faith as to a father, ready and willing to show mercy to His children, crying, "Abba, Father!" Thus you have the Scripture both asserting and opening this great duty. Be careful, therefore, how you disown praying in the Spirit, lest God disown your prayers ; as, without the Spirit, God takes no notice of Paul's prayers while he remained a Pharisee, but no sooner doth he pray in the Spirit, than God sets a mark upon it : "Behold he prayeth !" (Acts ix. 11.) It is said of Elias, that "he prayed in prayer," (James v. 17, *margin*.) A person may *say* prayers who yet cannot be said to pray. It is only through the Spirit of prayer that we come to "*pray* in prayer," and hence to prevail in prayer ; for there can be no praying with gracious acceptation, without the Spirit of grace and supplication ; neither can you expect to hear the voice of God answering your prayers, unless God hears the voice of His Spirit in your prayers.



### III.—REFLEX ACTION OF PRAYER.

Though without prayer God knows what we want, yet He will have us pray, that we may testify the sense we have of our wants. The spreading our cases before God, is not (in one sense) to inform Him, but to affect ourselves. Neither is prayer to be considered as a motive to make God more ready to give, but as a means to make us more fit to receive. It is a sign that the soul is sensible of the want and worth of mercy, and that God is the fountain and giver of every mercy to the soul that is fervent, frequent, and faithful in praying for mercy. Would you, then, obtain mercy by prayer, endeavour through prayer to be fitted for the mercy you would obtain.

### IV.—HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.

Many sincere suppliants fear the success of their prayers, because of the weakness of their faith. They have their doubts, and therefore question

whether they shall succeed ; especially on considering such Scriptures as these : “ I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,” (1 Tim. ii. 8.) “ Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering ; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the winds and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,” (James i. 6—8.) But here consider : Though all kinds of doubts argue weakness, yet some kind of doubts may not shut out prayer ; for then how should those pray who question God’s love to them, and their interest in Him ? Or, how should they pray without doubting, who have but a *peradventure* to ground their faith upon ? “ Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment ; seek righteousness, seek meekness : it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger,” (Zeph. ii. 3.) Yet such are commanded to pray, and such have prayed

with success. Thus Jonah : "I said, I am cast out of thy sight ; yet I will look again towards thy holy temple," (Joel ii. 4.) And David : "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes : nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee," (Ps. xxxi. 22.)

The doubts spoken of by James, are such doubts as arise from a double-minded man, whose mind is wavering and divided between two objects. Sometimes he is for depending upon God, at other times for resting upon creatures. Sometimes he looks upon prayer as a useful means, at other times not. For a person to doubt and dispute whether God be able to help, or be a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him ; or whether prayer and attendance upon God be the means of obtaining mercy—these doubts directly militate against success in prayer. Take heed therefore of them, and be single-minded, cleaving to God alone in His own appointed way, as almighty, faithful, and gracious.

And though, in other respects, you may have doubts about the success of your prayers, yet come, that through prayer you may have success against your doubts.

#### V.—ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

I. As we must pray fervently and believingly for our mercies, so we must diligently and prudently look for an answer after we have prayed. David saith, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up," (Ps. v. 3.) "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," (Ps. lxxxv. 8.) And so must we if we would have the Lord hear what we speak. We cannot expect that God will regard those petitions which we regard not ourselves. Many pray without success, because they are careless as to the success of their prayers. Again: as we must carefully wait for an answer, so we must be able prudently to judge how God does answer. We cannot be rightly thankful for those answers of which we

are unmindful, or in which we are unskilful. Did we wisely consider God's dealings, who never said to the seed of Jacob seek ye my face in vain, how might our experience be increased, our faith strengthened, our heart enlarged, our communion with God promoted, and good thoughts of God preserved! If you would not speak in vain to God, let not God speak in vain to you.

II. God may graciously answer prayer, though at present he does not give us what we prayed for; and He may give at present what we prayed for, and yet not graciously answer prayer. God may graciously hear prayer, though He does not immediately give the particular mercy prayed for. He may at present delay answering our requests, that so we may be prepared for the mercy, and the mercy for us—and yet return a gracious answer to our prayers, by giving praying, believing, waiting strength, till the mercy come. Again;

God may not only delay, but altogether deny, the mercy we pray for; and yet, by bestowing a greater mercy, return a gracious answer to prayer. David prayeth for the life of his child, (2 Sam. xii. 15—23;) God denies it, but gives him a Solomon to sit upon his throne. Or, in regard to a temporal mercy which we request, God may deny us, and in the room of it give us a spiritual mercy: Thus, under a languishing body we pray for health; God, in the room of it, gives us a prosperous soul, and soundness of spiritual constitution. Under restraint we pray for liberty; instead of it, God sets the soul at liberty to run in the way of His commandments. We pray to be freed from the hands of persecutors; in place of it, God grants the Spirit of glory to rest upon us. We pray to be delivered from the buffetings of Satan; instead of it, God gives a sufficiency of grace. We plead to be delivered from such a temptation; God continues the temptation, but “with it

also makes a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it," (1 Cor. x. 13.) We pray for this or the other temporal mercy; in the room of it God puts gladness into our hearts, by lifting up the light of His countenance upon us, revealing His love to us, or by working holy contentedness in the mind, sweet satisfaction in His good pleasure, and quiet submission to His will. On the other hand, God may give what is prayed for, and yet not graciously answer prayer. Thus to the murmuring Israelites He gave quails, but it was in wrath; and again, upon their asking, He gave them a king, but it was in anger, (*See* Numb. xi. 33; Hos. xiii. 11.) God many times answers the desires of wicked men, by giving them prosperity in this world, but it is in judgment: thereby they become more secure, proud, and hardened, and so are ripened for destruction. Would you then judge rightly of the answers to your prayers, compare your mercies with your petitions, and consider

whether the mercy received be not the same in kind as that you prayed for, or whether it be not a mercy of a better kind. Compare also thy receipts with their effects, and see what influence mercy hath upon thy heart and life. Consider not only what has been done for thee, but what is wrought in thee, and done by thee. It is a sweet sign thy mercy came as a gracious answer to prayer, and as the fruit of love, if thou art made more gracious by it, and more fruitful under it.

## VI.—PRAYER AND MEANS.

In prayer, we are apt either to neglect the means, as if God should do all; or in the use of the means to neglect prayer, as if they could do all. But though God hath not tied Himself to means, yet hath He tied us; but so tied us as in the means to tie us to Himself. Thus, while David prayed, he also used the means: "One thing," says he, "have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," (Ps. xxvii. 4.) The



one thing, in his desire, was the great thing in his endeavour. As Nehemiah and the people made their prayer to God, so they set a watch against the enemy, (Neh. iv. 9;) and as we must pray, so also must we use the means. Moses sets Joshua to fight against Amalak; but while he lifts up his hand against the enemy, Moses lifts up his on the mount, (Exod. xvii. 8—13.) As it is not enough to pray for a mercy, without using suitable means towards the obtaining of our prayer; so it is not enough to use the means, without looking up for a blessing upon what we use. Take heed, therefore, that thou lose not thy prayers by the neglect of means, or a blessing upon the means through the neglect of prayer.

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## ORDINANCES.

“Ordinances have been often undervalued by those whose Christian path has been at all solitary. They have found the Lord gracious in caring for them; and they have the tendency to regard all care through pastors, or instruction through teachers, as though it were rather beneath communion with God, and that dependence on Him in which they have found true blessing. But the exceeding grace of the Lord, in especial cases, must not be a ground for undervaluing His common modes of guidance and instruction.”

S. P. TREGELLES, LL.D.

## I.—ORDINANCES BLESSED.

GOD's ordinances are called His name. Jerusalem is said to be the city which the Lord chose out of all the tribes of Israel to put His name there, (1 Kings xiv. 21.) God therefore promiseth to be present with, and to bless His ordinances: “In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee,” (Exod. xx. 24.) Many are apt to complain that they have waited long, and have not attained this blessing; whereas, it may be, they overlook

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the blessing they have attained. Though you say you see not the glory of God in His ordinances, yet have you not felt something of God's power therein? Though you say you do not behold the goings of God in the sanctuary, yet have you not felt something of His workings in thy soul? Is there no warmth of heart, no stirring of affection, no impression of holiness found in thee, either *in* or *after* ordinances? Though thou feelest no sensible approaches of God to thy soul, dost thou not find God keeping thy soul in a waiting, depending frame upon Him, in His ordinances? Dost thou not say, "However God deals with me, yet will I wait upon Him; for, if I obtain not the blessing when He commands it, how can I expect it when He has not promised it? If I do not thrive in the enclosed garden, am I more likely to grow in the open field? If I do not flourish beside the living streams, am I more likely to prosper in the parched desert?" Doth God keep thee close to ordinances?

Even this is a blessing: "Blessed is the man that heareth me," saith wisdom; "watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors," (Prov. viii. 34.) Though at present you have not those mercies you wait for, yet is it a great blessing to be kept diligently waiting for the mercies you desire to have.

## II.—ORDINANCES NOT TO BE NEGLECTED.

Some are prone to keep away from ordinances because they cannot come with such a heart as they would. But, take heed; he that is unfit to-day, may be more unfit to-morrow. The more we give way to our sloth, the more ground will be gained by our corruptions. If thou canst not find thy heart fit, come, that it may be made fit. Though we should endeavour after a good frame, yet God will have us know that the preparation of the heart is from Himself, (Prov. xvi. 1.) Therefore, though you cannot bring such a heart as you would, yet come and beg for such a heart as you desire to bring.

### III.—ORDINANCES NOT TO BE UNDervalUED.

Some have too low, and others too high thoughts of ordinances. Some say of ordinances, as Naaman did of the Jordan; "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not wash in them and be clean?" (2 Kings v. 12.) Thus do many despise both ordinances and the wisdom and authority of God in them; and, not being satisfied with their plainness, endeavour to make them more pompous. But while they think in this way to put a glory on them, they take away their efficacy; and, while labouring to gratify their senses, hinder the benefit of their souls. God commanded an altar of earth to be built by the children of Israel, on which they were to sacrifice to Him; and, if an altar of stone, then not of hewn stone. "For," saith He, "if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it," (Exod. xx. 25.) That which men

account polishing, God accounts polluting, and that which they call adorning God calls defiling.

Another sort there are, who, pretending they have obtained the substance, therefore need not the shadow. They have the baptism of the Spirit, and need not the baptism of water. Christ is come unto them, so that they need not ordinances to remind them of His coming. The day has dawned, and the daystar risen; therefore they need not the word. Thus they embrace a cloud for a star, and night for light; whereas the primitive Christians, who were filled with the Spirit, kept close to ordinances. Stephen, who was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," (Acts vi. 5,) is chosen a deacon. Those upon whom the Holy Ghost was poured out were commanded to be baptized, (Acts x. 44, 47.) And God says, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) The Spirit of God

is not given to discharge from ordinances, but to fit us to walk with God in them. On the other hand, as some have too low, so others have too high thoughts of ordinances. They look for that from ordinances which they can receive only from Christ. They expect that from Paul's "planting" and Apollos' "watering," which they are to have from God alone, "who giveth the increase," (1 Cor. iii. 6.) In the sixth chapter of Numbers, Aaron and his sons were, by an ordinance, to pronounce a blessing upon the people; but it was God who was to give it: "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them," (verse 27.) Therefore, highly esteem and diligently attend upon the plain and pure ordinances of Christ. But expect not that from the cistern which you can only have from the fountain; or that from the presence-chamber which thou art to receive from the king.

## MERCIES.

"The ocean-depth of God's mercy can never be sounded by the plummet of man's misery."

ANON.

### I.—THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S MERCIES.

GOD, in distributing his favours to His children, deals not with them after the manner of men; for, if they have previously given liberally, they use that as an argument for withholding any further gifts; but God gives more abundantly because He has already given liberally: "For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance," (Matt. xiii. 12.) God makes one mercy the pledge of another; yea, of many mercies. Spiritual mercies He makes pledges of temporal mercies: "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul," (Ps. cxxxviii. 3.) From God's giving praying strength and spiritual strength, the Psalmist concludes that he shall be delivered from



his enemies (verse 7), and that the Lord would perfect that which concerned him. God also gives temporal mercies as pledges of spiritual mercies: "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and shall preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom," (2 Tim. iv. 18.) From God's delivering Paul from Nero's cruelty, he concludes that he would "deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him to His heavenly kingdom." Oh, how sweet should every mercy be to them who through grace have obtained mercy. Consider, further, that although there may be many a good thing which a child of God may not have, yet there is not any good which a child of God shall want; for He who hath promised the greater, yea, the greatest mercy, will give the less. This inference the Scripture confirms: "The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.) If He has given us Christ, "how shall He not with Him freely give us all things,"

(Rom. viii. 32.) And though it be our duty to pray, and use endeavours to obtain what is promised, because He who hath decreed the mercy hath also determined the means, yet having done so, we are quietly to cast our cares upon God; and though we may not have what we think good, yet we shall be sure to have what God knows to be best.

## II.—THE IMPROVEMENT OF DIVINE MERCIES.

Many partake of the Divine mercy in common Providence, who never knew what it was to enjoy a mercy out of spiritual favour. But how precious is that mercy which is handed in to us through a precious promise. It comes to the soul not only as an effect of general bounty, but as the fruit of humble prayer. To such a mercy we have a covenant right. We enjoy it not only as by God's leave, but as from His love. Thus did Hannah receive a child from God; and if you have Hannah's frame of heart under your mercy, you may

conclude that it comes to you as indeed a mercy. This is the case:—(1.) If you rejoice more in the God of your mercy than in the mercy you have received from God. Thus Hannah did, (1 Sam. ii. 1.)

(2.) If in the enjoyment of your mercy you have gracious visits and admiring thoughts of the Giver of all your mercies. So Hannah, again: "There is no rock like our God," (verse 2.) So Jacob, too, when in the face of Esau he saw the face of God; and in his smiles, the smiles of God, (Gen. xxxiii. 10.)

(3.) If your affections are so spiritualized under your mercy, that you can close with a holy God, as well as with a gracious God. So Hannah, (verse 4.)

(4.) If the enjoyment of your mercy tends to the increase of your faith; it did Hannah's: she believed not only for herself, but for others, even for all the people of God, (ver. 6—10.)

(5.) If your heart is enlarged to lay out for God that which you have re-

ceived from Him. Hannah dedicates her mercy to Him from whom it came: she gave her Samuel unto the Lord, (1 Sam. i. 24—28.) This should be the great care and endeavour of our souls in seeking mercy, not only that we may receive the blessing, but that we may receive it as a blessing.

### III.—THE APPRECIATION OF DIVINE MERCIES.

Truly to prize every mercy, and in order to excite true thankfulness in the heart for every mercy, we should, upon the reception of the mercy, look both backward and forward. If it be a spiritual mercy inseparable from the love of God, or a temporal mercy so sanctified that it cannot be severed from the same love, first look backward, and take occasion from the present mercy to revive in your heart the remembrance of all your former mercies; yea, run up to the fountain head, from whence it proceeds: "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me. . . . What shall I

render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me," (Ps. cxvi. 6, 12.) From this deliverance the Psalmist renews upon his soul the memorial of all former mercies. In Isa. xxxviii. 17, Hezekiah thus runs his mercies up to the fountain head: "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption." Looking forward also, view your mercy as the pledge of future mercies, till you come to glory. Thus David, considering the greatness of the mercy he experienced, assures himself: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," (Ps. xxiii. 6.) The way to excite a right esteem of our mercies, and a due thankfulness for them, is to view all our mercies as flowing from that love which is from everlasting, and carried on in a blessed connection by the same love which is to everlasting.

#### IV.—SPECIAL MERCIES.

The Divine approbation or disapprobation cannot be known by providential

dispensations, for, says the Preacher, "I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them," (Eccles. ix. 1;) yet by a right carriage under them, and a good improvement of them, we may conclude that such mercies come to us not only of common bounty, but from especial love. Thus: Do your mercies tend to raise within you a higher esteem of Christ, by whom they are procured, and through whom they are conveyed? Is it your endeavour to see God in them, to draw near to God by them, to enjoy God through them, to serve God with them, and to be thankful to God for them? This is a sign that your mercies flow from special love. Therefore, if you would have special evidence of distinguishing love from the general goodness of the Lord, then fear the Lord and His goodness, (Hos. vi. 3.)

## THE PROMISES.

"His every word of grace is strong  
As that which built the skies ;  
The voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the Promises."

WATTS.

## I.—PRECIOUS PROMISES.

THE promises of the Gospel are "exceeding great and precious," (2 Pet. i. 4) They are "*precious*," because flowing from precious love, obtained with precious blood, carrying with them the precious Spirit, and conveying through them precious grace ; they are "*exceeding great and precious*," since by them we are, as the Apostle tells us in the same Scripture, "made partakers of the Divine nature." It is therefore of unspeakable concern rightly to know, and diligently to improve them.

The promises are either absolute or conditional : promises *of* grace, or promises *to* grace ; and thus suited both to

saints and sinners. *Art thou unconverted?* Have recourse to Christ in an absolute promise, and beg grace of Him who gives grace without a condition. *Art thou converted?* Have recourse to Christ in a conditional promise, and of Him who hath wrought the condition beg the grace promised to the condition. And if thou canst find but one saving condition in thy soul, which claims right to any one promise, thou mayest conclude thence that thou hast a right to every promise. For, as all saving graces are knit together, so all the promises go together. Hence, promises are called *many* in one Scripture, *one* in another, (Gal. iii. 16, 17;) being all branches of the same covenant. Know, therefore, that though in this imperfect state thou dost not completely come up to the required condition, yet Christ hath completely fulfilled that condition, not for Himself, but for His people; that so the promise may be performed unto them for His sake, in whom all the promises are “yea and amen.”



## II.—THE PROMISE OF THE PRECEPT.

When you have a precept bring it to a promise, and when you have a promise plead it with God in prayer; and do not question whether the promise belongs to you, seeing you cannot deny that the precept does; though you are no more particularly mentioned in the one than in the other. If thou thinkest thyself under the word of command, why not under the word of promise? Thou mayest as well claim the promise for thy comfort, as the commandment for thy duty. Or dost thou think thyself only under this or the other commandment, and not under every commandment?—why not under this as well as the rest? “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,” (1 John iii. 23.) Beg of God, then, that as He hath set forth His will in the precept which He requires you to obey, He would also put forth His grace in the promise, that you may obey what He requires.

## III.—THE PROMISE AND FAITH.

The promises of God to His children are free, and therefore firm. They are *free*, because He who promiseth them grace at first, finds no grace in them to which to make a promise. He who hath made conditional promises, gives the conditions in the promise, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) He who promises forgiveness on repentance, promises repentance also in order to forgiveness, (Acts v. 31.) And as by faith we receive the promise, so through the promise we receive faith: "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," (Ps. cxix. 49.) And because the promises are free they are also *firm*; being founded not on the desert of the creature, but on the good pleasure of the Creator, "who will have mercy because He will have mercy;" and "who loves because He hath loved," (Rom. ix. 15; Deut. vii. 7, 8.) Let no unworthiness, therefore, suspend the actings of faith; for pro-

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mises are not given because God's children are worthy of them, but because they need them: and they shall be fulfilled, being founded not on their mutable frames, but on His immutable grace. Not on what they are, but upon what Christ hath done.

#### IV.—THE PROMISE SANCTIFYING.

When grace is high, and corruptions low, how ready are many sincere Christians steadfastly to look, with the eye of faith, upon the promise; but, on the contrary, when grace is low, and corruptions high, they turn away their eyes from them. This is, however, to neglect a special means appointed for the mortification of sin, and the perfecting of grace, (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

The Promises have a cleansing and quickening virtue in them: (1.) As they lead to Christ, who is a fountain open for sin and all uncleanness, (Zech. xiii. 1;) and the vital head of life and influence. (2.) As they are means of nourishing the graces of faith, love,

hope, &c.; by which other graces are increased, and sin declines. (3.) As they unfold to us the attributes of God, such as His great love, rich grace, and free bounty; which are His glory, and beholding which we "are changed from glory to glory," (2 Cor. iii. 18.) (4.) As they take us off from things which defile, by presenting better things to us, and raising our affections to delight in them. Therefore, let not the motions of sin, or the weakness of grace, be the means of hindering you from looking upon the promises, but rather a motive to quicken you to improve them. Only in this, and all like cases, abuse not the remedy, by being careless to prevent the malady. Make not that which is your relief under such a frame, an encouragement to fall into it.

#### V.—OUR RIGHT TO THE PROMISE.

Some stand off from closing with a promise, because they know not whether it belongs to them. In this case, remember acceptance gives propriety.

"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," (Rev. xxii. 17.) What makes the water of life thine but thy taking it? When a man presents a gift to me, I do not stand questioning whether it belongs to me, but I accept it that it may be mine. So, would you know whether a promise belongs to you, close with the promise, or rather with Christ in it, who is virtually all the promises, and therefore called pre-eminently "*the* promise," (Heb. xi. 39.) Thus shall you clear your right, not alone to this or the other promise, but to every promise.

If you find a gracious qualification in your soul to which a promise is annexed, do not look upon it as that which deserves the good of the promise, but only as that which fits you for its enjoyment. Qualifications do not render us worthy of Christ, but Christ worthy to us. A precious Christ would not be precious to the soul without precious faith: "To you that believe He is precious," (1 Pet. ii. 7.) Neither think

of bringing any saving qualification to the promise, till you have received it from the Promiser; for He who has made promises to grace, gives also the grace to which He makes the promise. In applying a conditional promise, therefore, acknowledge the receipt of the good you bring to it, but disown your desert of that good you are encouraged to expect through it.

## VI.—CHRIST IN THE PROMISES.

The right way of improving the promises is *through them*, by faith, to apply thy soul to Christ, and Christ *in them* to thy soul; for all the promises lead to Christ, and centre in Him, who is the great promise. Christ is the sun and substance of all the promises. As all the promises are summed up in the covenant of grace, so the whole covenant of grace is summed up in Christ, who is hence called "the covenant," (Isa. xlii. 6.) Wouldest thou partake of all the good of the covenant? then

take hold of Christ, who was given for a covenant.

We should distinguish between receiving comfort from the promises, and receiving Christ in the promises. The Gospel presents unto us good things, and the natural belief of the heart may work a kind of faith in them, as it does respecting other things. Thus, from mistaken apprehensions of our interest in them, we may derive comfort, while we have not received Christ in them. The stony-ground hearers received the word with joy, but afterwards fell away because they had no root in themselves, (Matt. xiii. 20, 21.) Take heed, therefore, of receiving comfort while you have not received Christ.

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## THE SCRIPTURES.

"The Scripture has a body without, and within it has a soul; it hath a back and a shell, but within it hath pith, kernel, and marrow, and all sweetness for God's elect, which he hath chosen, to give them His Spirit, and to write His law, and the faith of His Son in their hearts."

TYNDALE.

## I.—SCRIPTURE WRESTED.

MANY there be who wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction; and, amongst many others, this portion is wofully perverted: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," (Rom. x. 13.) How many have presumed to expect salvation just because they cried "Lord, have mercy upon me;" and yet have perished for ever. To guard you against this rock, permit me to hang out some lights. *First*: One Scripture must be explained by another; in 1 John i. 9, it is said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" a Scripture which many stumble at, as if



a bare confession was enough ; whereas it is more fully explained, Prov. xxviii. 13, "If we confess and forsake our sins;" so this text, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," is thus qualified : "All that call upon him in truth," (Ps. cxlv. 18.) *Secondly*: As all graces are knit together, so are all duties ; and, therefore, life and salvation are sometimes annexed to one duty, sometimes to another. Thus—to *seeking* God, (Sam. iii. 25,)—to *hearing* the word, (Prov. viii. 34,)—and here, to *calling* upon God. So that where one duty is mentioned, to which blessedness is attached, every duty is implied. *Thirdly*: This text must be understood by the scope of the subject, which is to prove that salvation is not by the righteousness that is of the law, but the righteousness which is of faith. It is not a righteousness that is to be obtained by *doing*, that will justify, but that which is obtained by *believing*, (see verse 11.) The Apostle saith, "whosoever believeth" shall be

saved, whether he be Jew or Gentile; and that which in verse 11 he calls believing, in verses 12, 13, is expressed by "calling on the name of the Lord." There is no right calling upon the name of the Lord unto salvation without faith; as it follows, "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" (verse 14.) Wouldest thou then savingly call upon the name of the Lord? First, call upon Him *sincerely*, subjecting thyself to His command. And, secondly, call upon Him *believingly*, submitting to His righteousness.

## II.—SCRIPTURE HARMONIZED.

Those Scriptures which seem to disagree, when rightly understood sweetly harmonize. Though Paul asserts "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," (Rom. iii. 28,) and James affirms "that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," (James ii. 24;) yet both being from the same Spirit of Truth, there must be

truth in both alike. Paul speaks of faith as it justifieth, and so is not a dead and barren, but a working and fruitful faith; such a faith as Abraham and Rahab had—a living faith, not such as the devils have, who believe and tremble. Again, Paul speaks of faith as it justifieth before God; James, as it is justified before men, and in our own conscience. Paul speaks of the justification of our persons; James, of the justification of our faith itself. What is it that justifieth our persons before God but faith without works? What justifieth our faith before men but good works? “Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works,” (James ii. 18.) And even the apostle Paul himself, who so frequently asserts justification to be by faith without works, would have it “affirmed constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works,” (Tit. iii. 8.) Not only that they should *do* good works, but that they should be *exem-*

*plary* therein. The word rendered "to maintain" is a military word, taken from those who place themselves in the front, marching manfully before the rest, to encourage them. And they are not only to maintain good works, but to "be careful" to maintain them. The word signifies to *study*, to *devise*, to *exercise thought*. They are wisely and carefully to study how they may be most useful and fruitful; industriously and exemplarily to be forward in good works, so as to quicken, strengthen, and encourage others. Let faith and works, then, have each their proper place. As they are not to be joined in the matter of justification, so they are not to be separated in the matter of conversation.

### III.—SCRIPTURE UNDERSTOOD.

Light is not more pleasant to the eye than knowledge to the mind; men therefore, according to their different inclinations, direct their studies to the increase of it. Many fix upon Divinity, and yet, after long study, remain igno-

rant of truths of the greatest importance. I have heard of a famous Grecian who in the New Testament reading the word Regeneration (*παλιγγενεσία*), said, "Surely it could not be good Greek, as he had never met with it in any author:" such a stranger was he, not only of the work but the very notion of regeneration. Others there are who attain clear notions of the principal heads and truths of revelation, but remain ignorant of their power and influence: they have a speculative—not an operative; a common—not an experimental knowledge. With heads full of light, they have hearts devoid of life; and, while they earnestly covet knowledge, they do not really love truth. But what doth it avail to have a notional knowledge of God, and to have no real interest in Him; to have a general acquaintance with Christ, without a particular application of Him; to be able to discourse of the covenants of promise, and yet to be strangers to them; to have skill to open the nature of faith and repentance,

and to want the possession and power of both? In a word, to be like a hand set up in the way, to point out the city of refuge to others, and not to move at all towards it ourselves? To be a good proficient in heavenly studies, your understanding must be enlivened as well as enlightened. Receive the truth into your heart as well as your head; and draw out your knowledge into practice, so through practice will you increase your knowledge. (See John vii. 17; Ps. cxix. 99, 100.)

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## MISCELLANEOUS.

## I.—CONVICTIONS RESISTED.

It is too frequently the case for persons when under convictions to evade them, either by unseasonable diversions or deceitful resolutions. The woman of Samaria, when charged by the Saviour with her sin, evades it by asking a question about the place of worship, (*See* John iv. 16, 20.) Thus many, instead of falling under the power of religion, fall disputing about religion. Others, instead of turning to the study of their hearts, turn aside to the cares and pleasures of the world, (*Matt.* xiii. 22.) I have heard of one who, upon his death-bed, acknowledged that he had experienced many convictions; and being asked how he had satisfied himself under them, or how he had got rid of them, answered, "I filled my hands with business from the one end of the week to the other, that so I might not think of them." But beware of stifling convic-

tions, or checking the voice of conscience. If convictions do not increase your humiliation, they will aggravate your condemnation. And, if conscience be not now regarded as your monitor, it will be heard elsewhere as your tormentor. Others again evade their convictions by deceitful resolutions. When they see their sins, and the necessity of a change of life, they labour to quiet their consciences with resolutions to set to work hereafter, (Acts xxiv. 25 :) not considering that God may deny them *their* time, who deny Him *his* time. For they who in a sinful way strive against God's Spirit, may, in a judicial way, be denied the Spirit to strive any longer with them. Therefore attend speedily to this work. If thou resolve hereafter to repent, why not now? Since if not now thou mayest be denied grace to repent hereafter.

## II.—DESIRES—TRUE AND FICTITIOUS.

Many, hearing that the desire of grace *is* grace, conclude that they have grace



because they have desires. But it is to be feared that the desire of many is like that of the slothful, of whom it is said, "The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour," (Prov. xxi. 25.) They content themselves with desires, and put forth no endeavours; they think their hearts right, though their hands be idle: and this slays them; for as "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing," (Prov. xiii. 4;) so it is a sign there is no grace where there is nothing but bare desires. True desires of grace are *knowing* desires; they spring from the knowledge of the worth and need of grace. They are *restless* desires, which cannot be satisfied in the want of grace. They are *extensive* desires; for it is not small measures or degrees of it that will serve. And they are *laborious* desires, taking pains and using means for the obtaining of grace. It is said, "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom," (Prov. xviii. 1.) That is, a man who

hath a desire after wisdom, separates himself from whatever may obstruct or hinder him therein; and he intermeddleth with all wisdom, *i. e.*, he applies himself to all the means likely to procure it. Take heed, therefore, that you neither perish for want of desires after grace, nor miscarry for want of joining endeavours to those desires.

### III.—THE SOUL CONSIGNED TO CHRIST.

Many would have Christ to receive them when they die, who care not to receive Christ while they live. Then they would resign themselves into his hands, though they will not now resign themselves unto His will. But how can you expect entertainment from Him hereafter, when you will not give entertainment to Him now? That ever He should receive your spirit, who would not receive His Spirit; or, that He should keep that which you commit to Him, who never would commit it while you could keep it? This work of com-

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mitting our spirits into God's hands, is not only to be done once, but often. David in his troubles cries out: "Into thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth," (Ps. xxxi. 5.) If, therefore, you would have it at last well done, be always committing your soul to Him in well doing, (1 Peter iv. 19; 2 Tim. i. 12.)

#### IV.—ACCEPTABLE PRAISE.

As all the mercies of believers come through Christ, so must all their praise be rendered to God through Him. We must not suppose, because praise is a giving duty, that we have less need of the mediation of Christ for its acceptance than in prayer, which is a receiving duty. For, as prayer is to be put into the hand of the angel of the covenant that it may be perfumed with His increase, and as the sacrifices of old, though perfect in themselves, were to be put into the hands of the priest that they might be offered up with acceptance; so all our sacrifices of praise,

though performed with the best frame of heart, in the liveliest manner, and out of the purest love to God, must be put into the hands of our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that they may be offered up acceptably to God: "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name," (Heb. xiii. 15.)

#### V.—HUMAN INCONSISTENCY.

When the wise men came to Jerusalem and inquired, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" it is said, "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, *and all Jerusalem with him*," (Matt. ii. 1—3.) That Herod, who was seated upon the throne, should be troubled at the birth of the King of the Jews, is no wonder; but that all Jerusalem should be troubled;—those who expected the coming of the Messiah—prayed for his coming—and looked for deliverance from Him

when He came—seems strange. Probably they remembered what was spoken by the last of their prophets, (Mal. iii. 2, 3;) and, being degenerate in their profession, that might occasion their trouble. Many pray, “Thy kingdom come,” who would be greatly troubled at the coming of that kingdom, when they found the “woe” of Amos coming upon them, (Amos v. 18.) Balaam, speaking of that day, and the things to come to pass therein, saith, “Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!” (Num. xxiv. 23.) Be prepared, therefore, for what you pray for, if you would comfortably sustain the answer to your prayers.

#### VI.—LOVE UNCHANGEABLE.

In all His various dealings with believers, God still carries on the same design of grace. For, though He change the dispensation, He does not change His love;—though He change His providences, He does not change His purposes;—though He hide His face, He

does not withdraw His heart. Therefore, under all the changes we meet with here, whether from within or from without, let us not say God is changeable in His grace towards us, but let us know that we have been changeable in our carriage towards Him.

### VII.—GRACE FOR GRACE.

The mistake of many Christians is, to spend that time in questioning whether they have grace, which should be spent in using the grace they have. To be disputing against themselves they think is humility : but take heed that you do not bear false witness against yourself, and especially that you do not bear false witness against Christ, and the work of His Spirit in your soul. The Church, notwithstanding her blackness, owns her beauty: "I am black, but comely," (Song i. 5.) She acknowledges what there is of grace, as well as what there is of corruption: "I sleep, but my heart waketh," (verse 2.) Take heed that you do not take part with

the tempter against the Comforter, by refusing the comfortable hints and intimations of the Spirit, and closing with the unbelieving suggestions and insinuations of Satan. Improve the exercise of grace, that you may attain to the knowledge of grace: for if grace be strong, as it possibly may be, though under a cloud of temptation or desertion at present, this is the way to cause it to break forth and shine clearly. Or, if it be weak, it is still the way to increase and make it more discernible. But if, after all, thy doubts return, and thou fearest thou hast no grace to exercise, take this advice: Spend less time in disputing against thyself, and more in addressing thyself to Christ. Beg of Him, either to clear up what thou hast, or to work in thee what thou hast not.

#### VIII.—FALSE FOUNDATIONS.

It is very difficult to be always resting on the true foundation. We are too prone to live a life of sense, when we should be living by faith. *Some-*

*times we live upon our resolutions.* After seeking God, we have holy purposes in our souls of walking more circumspectly, and living more profitably, and in the strength of these we go forth to obey. Therefore God sometimes suffers corruptions to prevail against our resolutions; our work proves too hard for our engagements, because we rest too much on them. God may work the will and yet suspend the ability, to bring us to an entire dependence upon Himself. *Sometimes we live upon the grace we have received,* and therefore it often proves too weak for the work. We would fain be strong in the grace that is in us; whereas we are to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, from whom we receive continued supplies. *Sometimes we live upon our attainments.* Because we are in a good frame, and find our hands and hearts enlarged for God, we are apt to conclude it will always be so. Hence we are left in straitness and barrenness, to teach us constant dependence upon Christ. After David



and his princes had offered so largely and willingly for the building of the temple, he makes this prayer: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and prepare (or establish) their hearts unto Thee," (1 Chron. xxix. 18.) As it is God who helps us with a heart to do good, so it is He that must establish our hearts in so doing. Therefore take heed of every false foundation; rest not upon any thing wrought in thee, or by thee, for this is to rest short of Christ.

### IX.—GRACE AND MEANS.

As we are to trust in God alone in the want of means; so we are to trust in God only when we abound in means. (1.) In the want of means, we are to trust in God alone. Thus Habakkuk, (Hab. iii. 17, 18;) yea, under the death of means. Thus Abraham: God in His providence had allowed the time for fulfilling the promise to run on so long,

that Abraham "was about an hundred years old," and Sarah also, "old and well stricken in age;" yet in hope he believes against hope, (Rom. iv. 18.) (2.) And as in the want of means we are to trust alone in God; so in the enjoyment of means we are to trust only in Him. Thus Jehosaphat, when the Moabites and Ammonites came against him in battle, though he had good captains, and an army of mighty men of valour, even such an army that we read not of a greater, numbering eleven hundred thousand men; yet he trusted in God as though he had no force at all: "O, our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee," (2 Chron. xx. 12.) This, then, is our duty, and should be our constant endeavour; even in the want of means to trust as much in God as though all means were present; and in the possession of means to trust as much in God as if all means were

absent. Blessed is the man who, in the want of means, sees all in God, and under the abundance of means, expects all from God.

### X.—LOVE'S LABOUR EASY.

If Christians would make their work easy, and their lives fruitful, they must see to it that the love of Christ be much in their hearts, and His work much upon them. Love is the commanding affection of the soul. The way that goes all goes with it, mind, heart, and action. It sticks at no pains, labour, suffering. "Many waters," says Solomon, "cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," (Song viii. 7.) Jacob had hard service under a hard master, who changed his wages ten times. But though he lived with him long years of toil, labour, and suffering, "the drought consuming him by day, and the frost by night;" yet he patiently underwent all this for the love he bore to Rachel, and all the time he served for her seemed but a few days, (Gen.

xxix. 20.) And thus the love of Christ makes all the time we wait, work, or suffer, seem but little to us. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous," (1 John v. 3.) Would you then be fruitful? Let the work of God be much upon your heart. The heart of Paul was so much upon his work, that he preferred it to his life, (Acts xx. 24.) Yea, he was content to stay out of heaven for some time, that he might follow it. Though the fear of death was removed, and there was a desire to be dissolved, with an assurance that when dissolved he should be with Christ, and that with Christ he should be completely happy; yet he is content to stay here under sufferings, fastings, and labours, that he might be useful in the work of Christ, (1 Phil. i. 21—25.) And what saint more useful and profitable than Paul? Would you then do much for God, and yet think all that you do too little? Then love your work, and work out of love.

## XL—FEAR AND JOY.

As it is the duty of the saints to walk holily, so to live comfortably. They should fear continually, yet alway rejoice. In the ninth chapter of Acts it is said, that "the churches walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," (verse 31.) If our fear were rightly exercised, we should not be afraid to rejoice. As in evangelical rejoicing there is a rejoicing with trembling, so in Gospel fear there is a fearing with rejoicing; these mutually promote each other. As the fear of God helps us to keep up good thoughts of God under all His dispensations, and those thoughts help us to rejoice in Him; so rejoicing in God helps us to entertain low thoughts of ourselves under all His dealings, and those thoughts tend to promote the fear of Him. Suspect, therefore, that fear which hinders comfort, or that comfort which hinders fear.

## XII.—LAWFUL CARES.

The Christian, though he is to cast all his cares upon God, (1 Pet. v. 7,) is not to be without care. There is a care of diligence, and a care of disturbance. The former is the care of the virtuous woman: "She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard," (Prov. xxxi. 16.) This care of diligence consists in an industrious endeavour to provide things honest in the sight of all men, (Rom. xii. 17.) But there is also a care of disturbance, against which the disciples were cautioned, (Matt. vi. 25.) This care of disturbance is a distracting, anxious care, both as to the pursuit and the event of things cared for. This is what we should avoid. But, though discharged from the care of anxiety, we are not from the care of industry. Though we may cast off our burthens, yet not our business. God hath promised to sustain us in casting our burthens upon Him, (Ps. lv. 22;) but not to

maintain us in casting off our work from ourselves. Therefore, as one advises, take as much pains as you can, and as little care as you may. Be careful in your duty, and then leave all care to God.

### XIII.—CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

Great improvement is to be made of experience; for promises and experiences are the special food of faith. In promises, Christ is exhibited; in experiences, promises are exemplified. And though we are not to make experiences the ground of our faith, but Christ in the promise, yet we should use them as great encouragements to believing. The experiences of a child of God in times past, should be improved for the strengthening of faith for time to come. Thus David, (*See* 1 Sam. xvii. 37;) and Paul, (2 Tim. iv. 17, 18; 2 Cor. i. 10.) And not only our own, but the experiences of others should be regarded. The experience of the Church in former

ages, is held forth as matter of rejoicing to the Church for time to come, (Ps. lxvi. 5, 6.) Yea, the experience of a single saint is matter of encouragement to the whole Church, (Hos. xii. 4, 5; Ps. lxv. 4.) And, as the experience of each single saint is matter of encouragement to the whole body, so the experience of the whole body is matter of encouragement to each of its members. Thus the Psalmist strengthens his faith of deliverance from a great trouble, from what God had wrought for His people of old, (Ps. lxxvii. 10, 15, 16, &c.) Labour then to be rich in experiences, and free in the communication of them. And in the dark day, when thou see not thine own experience to derive confidence from it, have recourse to the experience of others.

#### XIV.—DIVINE TEACHING.

In order to a soul's coming to Christ, there is an absolute need of divine teaching. "They shall all be taught of



God," (John vi. 45.) So, likewise, in order to the soul's building up in Christ, there is the like necessity. Not as if there was no need of a Gospel ministry; for Christ hath appointed that as long as any saint shall need edifying and perfecting, (Eph. iv. 12, 13.) Hence we are not to understand this inward teaching in opposition to outward teaching, as though it was to exclude it, but as that which doth excel it. And, indeed, it is that which hath a transcendent excellency in it; for God is such a teacher that there is none like Him. This appears in divers respects :—

(1.) Men, though they may be willing to teach, yet it often happens that they cannot make their scholars willing to learn. But it is otherwise with God; for, as He teacheth what He would have us learn, so He makes us willing to learn that which He teacheth, (Ps. xxv. 4; Ps. cxliii. 10.)

(2.) Though men may have scholars who are willing to learn, yet they cannot give them an understanding to take in

that learning to which they are inclined. But God not only presents rules to be understood by us, but gives understanding to apprehend those rules, (1 John v. 20 ; 2 Tim. ii. 7.)

(3.) Though men may teach, and their scholars apprehend what is taught, yet they cannot give them hearts to close with what they apprehend. But God, as he gives an understanding to know the truth, so also a heart to affect and receive what is known. Thus the two disciples : "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken of Paul," (Acts xvi. 14.)

(4.) Men, though they teach, and the hearts of their scholars close with what is taught, yet may want ability to practise that with which they close. But God doth not only open the heart to receive truth, but strengthens the soul to practise what it receives. As He

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puts His law in the inward parts, so likewise His Spirit, "and causeth the soul to walk in His ways," (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) As you must, therefore, diligently attend upon the preaching of the word, so you must earnestly pray to be taught of God. For it is only those who can profit by teaching, whom God teacheth to profit.

#### XV.—GOD OUR PORTION.

As all the saints of God are His first-born, (Heb. xii. 23 ; Jer. xxxi. 9 ; Exod. iv. 22,) so they are all heirs ; and this arises from the near union they have in Christ. For, being members of Him, they make but one body with Him, and so come to partake of the same love, and to be invested with the same privileges. Is He God's first-born? So are they, (Rom. viii. 29.) Is He an heir? So are they : "If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," (ver. 17.) They are not only effective heirs of God, but objective, made heirs

by God. God himself is their inheritance. "I am thy . . . exceeding great reward," (Gen. xv. 2.) He doth not say, "I will give thee a reward;" but, "I myself will be thy reward." Thus He who is the supreme, pure, perfect, everlasting good, is the portion of His people. He who is the fountain, original good, from whence is all good, is their inheritance. Neither doth it lessen their inheritance because so many share in it; for every man enjoys as much of the sun, which is but a finite good, as if there were no more to enjoy it but himself. How much more shall each saint enjoy as much of God, who is an infinite good, as if no other saint were to inherit with him? In this consideration of God being his portion, well might the Psalmist say: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," (Ps. xvi. 6.) And so Jacob said to Esau, "I have all things," (Gen. xxxiii. 11 *margin*;) for he that inherits God, inherits all things, (Rev. xxi. 7.) Therefore, if God be thy

portion, thou hast unspeakable cause to be thankful to Him, to be satisfied with Him, and to rejoice in Him ; for, if God himself can make thee happy, thou shalt be happy. *Amen.*

END.

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